

RICE UNIVERSITY

**Multiple Mobilities: Race, Capital, and South Asian
Migrations To and Through Houston**


by

Uzma Quraishi

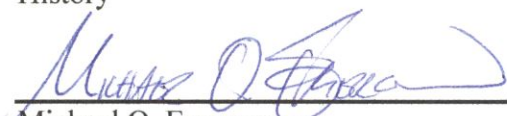
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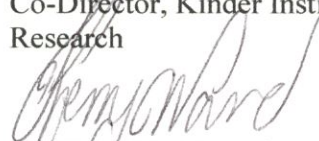
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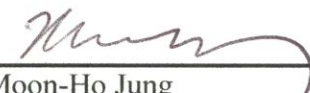
John B. Boles, Chair
William P. Hobby Professor
History



Michael O. Emerson
Professor, Sociology
Co-Director, Kinder Institute for Urban
Research



Kerry R. Ward
Associate Professor
History



Moon-Ho Jung
Associate Professor, History
Walker Family Endowed Professor
University of Washington

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MAY 2013

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ABSTRACT

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The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 proved to be a watershed that altered the demographic composition of the United States in unexpected and unprecedented ways. Immigrants from India and Pakistan (part of South Asia) represented a highly educated elite migration in the 1960s and 1970s and filled a gap in the American economy for technical and science-based labor. This advantage aided their emerging communities in achieving socio-economic success with unanticipated speed. This dissertation addresses the central question of this nexus of power—the social and economic systems of privilege—that enabled immigrant mobility after 1965. I argue that due to the significant achievements of the Civil Rights and ethnic empowerment projects of the late 1960s, South Asian immigrants were able use their material wealth to position themselves strategically through residential patterns and school selection in order to gain the maximum privileges associated with whiteness; they simultaneously sought to create social distance between themselves and other racialized, marginalized groups.

This research examines linkages and networks between geographically remote regions but ones that have been heavily invested in the expansion of capitalist systems. South Asians inserted themselves into a racially defined society, thereby consolidating

both their social position and their economic and eventual political power. The struggles of all minority groups are central to the nation's conceptual formation of itself—they delimit the boundaries of identities and of a national ethos. In addition, the immigrant generation of Indians and Pakistanis in the U.S. continues to play a crucial role in ethnic community development by providing leadership, cultural schooling, and entrepreneurial enclaves through which young co-ethnics construct ethnic identities and consume ethnic culture. Finally, as these particular immigrant groups have accumulated wealth —Indian and Pakistani Americans are among the highest-earning ethnic groups in the United States—they and their descendants are increasingly politically visible; my work seeks to explain this rapid rise to power.

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Introduction

Though it is tempting to concur with the subjects of this immigration study and begin the accounting of their long journey in Houston's historically African American neighborhood of Third Ward, it cannot be so. International university students from South Asia lived in Third Ward in the 1960s and 1970s and thus, begin their personal immigration narratives there. Instead, I begin this narrative in mid-twentieth century India and Pakistan. There, middle-class families secured quality schooling for their children and encouraged them to pursue advanced degrees or professional careers in the United States. Many of these students remained in the United States and by their own accounting, achieved the American Dream. Thus, they begin their narratives in the Third Ward as struggling students who came with "nothing" but built all that they eventually achieved by virtue of their hard work alone. Others in American society agree, elevating Asian Americans as *model minorities*. Though some Asian Americans, especially of the second and now, third generations, resent the imposition of expectation and representation inherent in the "model minority" label, many in the immigrant generation do not. For immigrants objectified by the term, the label is often a welcome one. It

highlights the shortcomings of other racialized groups while apotheosizing this racialized group. After all, who does not want recognition for positive achievement?

Incorporating struggle is an integral part of immigrants' narratives since it serves to bolster the trope of the American Dream as a rags-to-riches story. To be sure, immigrants struggle and have always struggled. Arguably, however, those with little capital and who work in secondary labor markets likely struggle for much longer and for more resources than do white-collar immigrants with advanced degrees and upwardly mobile employment in the primary labor market. The case of M.A.S. who migrated from Karachi, Pakistan, to Houston in the mid 1960s provides a useful illustration.¹ Born in Sultanpur, in northeastern India, M.A.S. migrated to Karachi in 1949 as a boy, two years after the independence and partition of India, and the creation of East and West Pakistan. He attended high school and college in Karachi before securing a low-level job as an air conditioning technician. He and his family decided that he needed to further his studies, and because he already had experience in air conditioning, what better place than the "air conditioning capital of the world": Houston.² M.A.S. enrolled at the University of Houston as a master's student in engineering in 1966 and initially lived in a shared apartment in Third Ward. After some time, his wife and young daughter joined him. Upon graduation, he worked for an engineering firm in Houston until 1980, after which he established his own air conditioning systems design company. He has, for the past decade, reduced his work hours and enjoyed semi-retirement. Since 1977 M.A.S. and his

¹ M.A.S., interview by author, 17 June 2007; tape and transcript deposited at the M.D. Anderson Library [MDA], University of Houston Libraries, University Archives Collection, Special Collections Department.

² See Robert S. Thompson, "'The Air Conditioning Capital of the World': Houston and Climate Control," in Martin V. Melosi and Joseph A. Pratt, eds., *Energy Metropolis: An Environmental History of Houston and the Gulf Coast*.

family have lived in an affluent area of Spring Branch, a northwesterly suburb of Houston. His daughter became a physician and his two sons, engineers. M.A.S.'s story, like that of other Indian and Pakistani immigrants to the U.S., is the story of a life—simple and joy-giving, complicated and contradictory. It is a story—much like other lives—a story of the struggle for identity, the transmission of culture, but also the accumulation of wealth, and with it, some degree of power.

In the early 1960s toward the end of a protracted era of struggle for African American civil rights, immigrants and college students from India and Pakistan began arriving in the United States for employment or to pursue higher education at American universities. With the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, a relatively select group of Indians and Pakistanis applied for admission to the United States either as university students or under the act's third or sixth preference—that of professionals or skilled labor currently in short supply. Many of these students remained in the U.S. to fill the demands of the labor market. The confluence of India's technological preparedness, the loosening of U.S. immigration restrictions, as well as the South Asian and American need for skilled labor were crucial in accelerating rates of Indian and Pakistani immigration to the United States. As Indians and Pakistanis completed their educations in American universities, they found a receptive labor market and thus settled in the United States and laid the foundations for a growing Indo-Pak community. Forty years later, tens of thousands of Houston area residents claim Indian or Pakistani descent. The city sprawls in every direction, with many areas housing high concentrations of South Asian immigrants and businesses. The ethnic entrepreneurial enclave at Hillcroft Avenue draws patrons from within the greater Houston area and

beyond, from places as distant as Dallas or Maryland. Immigrants have established formal and informal cultural groups, weekend schools for their children's religio-cultural education, religious institutions, community radio programs and newspapers, and social service organizations. They have found political representation in the form of local City Council and Board of Education elected membership, as well as national representation in the Obama administration.

When they first arrived in Houston, however, not only was there no expansive community infrastructure as there is today, Indians and Pakistanis navigated sometimes delicate social territory. South Asians were sometimes the targets of individual racism, for example, in the workplace or in their search for apartment residences. Between 1975 and 1985, however, slow shifts began to occur so that as Houston became an increasingly international city and as Indian and Pakistani immigrants met with material success, interviewees reported significant improvement in promotion opportunities. At the same time, they have continued to encounter a glass ceiling in the workplace leading to lower income levels than their white professional counterparts.³ In part, due to their rapidly increasing socioeconomic status, but also in response to their struggle for equal recognition, *many South Asian immigrants sought to create social distance between themselves and other racialized groups*. Immigrant strategizing for higher socioeconomic positioning was strengthened due to their academically "elite" nature; immigrants were professional and highly educated or seeking advanced degrees, and this allowed emerging communities to achieve material success with unanticipated speed. For the immigrants I examine, all of whom moved to Houston prior to 1979, the expression of race was more

³ Stephen Klineberg, "Diversity and Transformation Among Asians in Houston" (Rice University: Kinder Institute for Urban Research, February 2013), 23.

than just a passive attitude or verbalized ideology; it drove strategic choices and major life decisions including the location of residence and schooling for children. Upwardly mobile immigrants eventually settled in largely white suburbs and enrolled their children in majority white schools.

I argue that educationally elite South Asian immigrants negotiated their social, economic, and cultural positions in American society by making strategic decisions relative to the physical and symbolic locations of white, black, and Hispanic Americans. In this interdisciplinary study, I combine oral history interviews and recent sociological data on housing and school choice patterns to explore how Indian and Pakistani immigrants—newcomers to American racial landscapes though not to racial landscapes in general—constructed race within a southern, American context just *after* the dissolution of Jim Crow laws and practice in Houston, Texas. Because desegregation in housing and schools did not overnight erase existing racial ideologies, the insertion of newcomers in such a racialized landscape reveals broadly existing, albeit shifting, racial dynamics. Asking how South Asian immigrants learned about race, what race categories meant to immigrants, and how they saw themselves relative to these categories reveals the power structures already in place when immigrants arrive as well as how the presence of immigrants constitutes those structures.

I build on historian Vijay Prashad's arguments in his influential work, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, wherein Prashad contends that South Asian immigrants are "unaware" of the model minority myth, that is, how some sections of white America use the presence of an elite minority group to deflect attention away from weak social policy.⁴ I would

⁴ Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 94. Technically, South Asia also includes Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, Sri Lanka, and occasionally,

suggest, however, that although racialization processes may occur at a subconscious level, they are also very much in the sphere of action and agency.⁵ Being implicated in racialization processes means that not only does one, as a person of color, serve as the object of racialized discourses, one also imposes racialized discourses on others. In other words, while South Asians have been subjected to prejudice and discrimination themselves, they have simultaneously projected racial meanings onto others. It is at the intersections of these multiple, socially located gazes (South Asian on black; white on South Asian, etc.) that ideologies of race are produced.

Scholarship on the history of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent to the United States has often focused on collaborations between migrants from British India and other peoples of color in the U.S. Karen Leonard's now classic work, for example, uncovers Punjabi-Mexican intermarriage in the San Joaquin area of central California at a time when Sikh and Muslim agricultural laborers along with African Americans in the early 1900s suffered the indignity of a "No Negroes-No Hindoos" segregation policy in the American West.⁶ Writing about the networks of communication between leaders of the African American civil rights movement and leaders and the Indian nationalist movement, Gerald Horne locates common ties between oppressed groups.⁷ Documentary

Afghanistan, however, these countries have not sent as large numbers of immigrants to the U.S. as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Prashad and others, such as historian Sucheng Chan in *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), draw critical attention to the model minority myth.

⁵ As Michael Omi and Howard Winant argue, it is in the dynamic intersections of public policy and social movements that "race" is formed. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 53-55.

⁶ Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

⁷ Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).

film maker and erstwhile historian Vivek Bald “finds” a “lost history” of Bengali seamen and peddlers as they intermarried with African American women at the turn of the twentieth century in Harlem and New Orleans.⁸ On the other hand, sociologists look almost exclusively at the second generation even when race is a key subject matter.⁹ For example, Pawan Dhingra’s work, *Managing Multicultural Lives*, for instance, analyzes how Asian Indian and Korean American professionals in Dallas integrate their ethnic, racial, and American identities in everyday life.¹⁰ Mention is always made of the post-1960 immigrant generation but few undertake serious investigation, perhaps because it seems that the story is too straightforward. Expanding on the existing historiography, I ask how a group of immigrants from India and Pakistan became one of the wealthiest ethno-racial groups in the greater Houston area in the latter twentieth century.¹¹ Early in the century, British Indian immigrants intermarried with Mexican women on the west coast and African American women in Harlem; in mid-century America, African American civil rights leaders engaged in a fruitful exchange with Indian leaders during

⁸ Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁹ See, for example: Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity: Second-generation South Asian Americans Traverse a Transnational World* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Nitasha Tamar Sharma, *Hip Hop Desis: South Asian Americans, Blackness, and a Global Race Consciousness* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010); Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American: Indian Immigrants and the Cultures of Citizenship* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Sunaina Maira, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City* (Philadelphia [PA]: Temple University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ Pawan Dhingra, *Managing Multicultural Lives: Asian American Professionals and the Challenge of Multiple Identities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

¹¹ Klineberg, “Houston Area Survey: Diversity and Transformation Among Asians in Houston.”

and after the Indian struggle for independence in the 1940s. Like historian Vijay Prashad, I question: what happened to those sorts of collaborations?

Indeed, since passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act in the mid-1960s, those collaborations—that had grown out of a sense of marginalization and resistance to shared oppression—have been replaced by something else entirely. Between 1960 and 1980 immigrants from India and the newly created nation of Pakistan perceived non-white Americans not as allies in struggle, not as life partners, but largely as problematic, highly racialized subjects with whom serious interaction, both socially and spatially, was to be limited. Unlike in the past where class similarity, nativism, and segregation drew some immigrant groups and people of color together, this recent group was more privileged, arrived mostly after desegregation, and aligned themselves socially and economically with white, middle-class Americans. My work explores this new phase in immigration from South Asia.

The first wave of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent settled in California at the turn of the century prior to the passage of exclusionary immigration policies, while the second significant wave brought Indian and Pakistani immigrants to New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston.¹² Long recognized as a city bolstered by its national and global links, Houston moved from an agricultural economy to one that was anchored by the discovery of oil at Spindletop in 1901.¹³ Houston experienced constant growth since its inception in 1836, far surpassing the rate of growth in other U.S. cities.¹⁴ Houston

¹² Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy 1850-1990*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 103.

¹³ Ibid, 43.

¹⁴ Joe R. Feagin, *Free Enterprise City: Houston in Political-Economic Perspective*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 7.

emerged as a magnet for professional white-collar workers in the 1960s and 1970s as other cities in the North and Midwest faced serious economic and political recession. By 1970 Houston was a major metropolis with continued growth in sight. Profiting from high oil prices, Houston enjoyed a robust, oil-dependent economy until 1982. While the rest of the nation experienced a sluggish economy, Houston's economy responded in the opposite direction. Though the national economy experienced a depression, capital and people flowed into the South and Southwest.¹⁵ During the 1960s and 1970s, no American city could rival Houston's growth both in terms of construction and population; nearly one thousand new residents arrived weekly. A quintessential Sunbelt city, Houston's economy absorbed the influx and boasted an unemployment rate of only one-third that of the national rate.¹⁶ The city planners' need to build and expand the city in order to keep up with a constantly growing economy kept engineers in high demand.

Houston had been a biracial city since the Reconstruction when thousands of former slaves migrated to Houston. In the early 1900s a sizable Mexican population made the city its home. Prior to full racial integration in the 1960s, the city had operated under a Jim Crow system of "black" or "not black," but since most Asians arrived after 1965, they entered a city where official desegregation had already occurred. Nevertheless, immigrants of all backgrounds continued to face varying degrees of racism. Embracing its growing diversity, Houston's population grew by nearly a million people between

¹⁵ Robert Fisher, "The Urban Sunbelt in Comparative Perspective: Houston in Context," in *Essays on Sunbelt Cities and Recent Urban America* by ed. Raymond A. Mohl, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1990), 33-58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

1970 and 1982.¹⁷ Newcomers established ethnic entrepreneurial enclaves, community groups, churches, mosques, temples, and weekend schools. They celebrated their festivals, holy days, and national holidays, adding to the “roux for the rich gumbo of Houston’s many different racial, ethnic, and national groups.”¹⁸ Today Houston, like Los Angeles, is a “majority-minority” city, meaning that the non-Anglo population outnumbers the Anglo population.¹⁹ Within the non-Anglo population, approximately 385,700 Asians resided in the greater Houston area in the year 2010.²⁰

Indian immigration to the United States prior to 1965 totaled roughly 13,000, but from 1965 to 1970, 35,000 new Indians migrated along with an equal number of Chinese and slightly fewer Koreans. Between 1958 and 1965, the number of Pakistanis who entered the U.S. was 1,224 but from 1966 to 1972, Pakistani immigration rose to nearly 8,000.²¹ In the years 1966 to 1975, professionals comprised 80 to 90 percent of all Indian and Pakistani arrivals, although that number has steadily declined due to their sponsoring of non-professional relatives.²² In 1980, the Indian population in the United States was

¹⁷ Joseph A. Pratt, “Coming to Houston: 170 Years of Migration,” *Houston Review of History and Culture* 3:1 (Fall 2005): 8; Stephen L Klineberg, *The Houston Area Survey 1982-2005: Public Perception in Remarkable Times*, (Houston: Rice University, 2005), 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹ Klineberg, 15. The term “majority-minority” is problematic for at least two reasons: first, neither of these “groups” necessarily claims solidarity with one another, so that there are instead, many majorities and minorities, all allied along different intersections. Secondly, if one regards minorities as a group, then their increase in number destabilizes the very categories of “majority” and “minority.”

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010. These figures are a combined total of Harris and Fort Bend Counties, both of which have significant Asian or Asian-descent populations. 253,092 Asians reside in Harris County while an additional 97,597 live in Fort Bend County.

²¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports, 1967-1972* (Washington, D.C., 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972).

²² *Ibid.*, 200.

361,544 and by 1990, it had risen to 815,447.²³ The 2010 census lists 2.84 million Asian Indians in the United States, with the number steadily increasing since then. By comparison, the census reports 363,699 Pakistanis residing in the U.S. in 2010.²⁴ South Asian settlement patterns reflected the post-World War II regional and national migration trend toward large urban metropolises. Bound by their professional orientation, Indians and Pakistanis settled in areas of the United States that needed their skills. This included “large, economically diversified [metropolitan areas], where building activity or manufacturing was strong.”²⁵ Across the South, South Asians numbered 967,193 in 2010, of which roughly 110,500 (official census count) lived in the Houston area.²⁶ Other southern cities with substantial South Asian populations include Dallas-Fort Worth, Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham, and Arlington (Virginia).

Indians and Pakistanis have flocked to Houston to take advantage of its booming oil-led economy, advanced medical complex, and steady growth of jobs for engineering professionals, as well as for working-class immigrants. Others are drawn to the low cost of living in Houston. Today, estimates range widely regarding the Indian and Pakistani population in the Houston metropolitan area. Official U.S. Census 2010 data indicate total Pakistani and Indian populations in Houston of 27,856 and 82,575 respectively.²⁷

²³ S. Chandrasekhar, ed., *From India to America: A Brief History of Immigration*, (La Jolla, CA: Population Review Publications, 1982); U.S. Census.

²⁴ U.S. Census 2010.

²⁵ Surinder M. Bhardwaj and N. Madhusudana Rao, “Asians Indians in the United States: A Geographic Appraisal,” in *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* by eds. Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach, and Steven Vertovec, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 206-207.

²⁶ U.S. Census 2010. This includes Harris and Fort Bend Counties. An additional 3,000 live in the independent areas of Pasadena and The Woodlands.

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

Community self-reported estimates gauge higher numbers but sociologist Ahmad Afzal suggests that ethnic minority populations tend to over-estimate their size, probably to create a stronger political presence.²⁸ Most likely, actual populations fall midway between undercounted census data and inflated self-reported numbers. Large groups of immigrants remain unaccounted for in the 2010 U.S. Census data, including: unregistered, non-citizen Pakistani and Indian immigrants, in-migrants from other southern and northeastern states, and undocumented low-wage laborers. In addition, community sources such as the Indian and Pakistani embassies, religious organizations, and cultural associations who use head counts at large-pan-Indian and Pakistani programs arrange events for concrete numbers of people. Even a cursory totaling of these numbers reveals much larger populations than the census reflects.

The term “South Asian” emerged as a Cold War designation, reflecting the concerns of the United States of an expanding and influential China.²⁹ By designating the Indian Subcontinent a region distinct from the rest of Asia, the U.S. aimed to form strategic alliances with India but especially with Pakistan. It has since been used with some frequency by academic specialists when referring to immigrants from the countries regarded as part of South Asia: Bangladesh, Burma, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.³⁰ Less often, Afghanistan and Iran are also included, though more

²⁸ Ahmed Afzal, “Transnational Religious and Citizenship Practices and the Pakistani Immigrant Experience in Houston, Texas” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2005), 8.

²⁹ See Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: a Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁰ See Map 1 in Appendix. Regarding, in particular, immigrants from Bangladesh, they were officially subsumed under the category of “Pakistanis” prior to 1971. After the creation of Bangladesh, they obviously entered under that country’s quotas but have continued to enter the U.S. in much smaller numbers than Indians and Pakistanis.

typically they are designated as part of the Middle East. “South Asian” is primarily a political and academic label. It is rarely found in common usage among immigrants, though sometimes is used commercially in order to appeal to a broad South Asian consumer base. South Asians rarely refer to themselves as such. They prefer national (e.g. Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, American); regional/language-bound identities (e.g. Bihari, Tamil, Sindhi, Marathi); or religious affiliations (e.g. Jain, Muslim). These individuals are thick with identities, constantly layering, discarding, exchanging, and resting them as needed and also shifting in their understanding of each identity. It is with reservation that I ascribe to them the bounded label of “South Asian immigrants,” but it is inevitable and done with the awareness that they are so much more than what any label denotes.

Immigrants from India and Pakistan often speak of “community.” R.K. reflected that in 1975, when she first arrived in Houston from Chennai, “it was a very small community. Everybody knew everybody else. There was no north, south, east, west [Indian]. No differences. It was just a very close-knit community.”³¹ In the process of migration, those previously local or regional identities were collapsed into much broader identities. Z.A., an immigrant who arrived in the US in 1970 and moved to Houston in 1975, identified strongly as a Houstonian, rationalizing that he had lived longer in Houston than in India. He stated, “I am a Houstonian, more or less.”³² The “more or less” part is the more compelling and complex part of the above quotation. Z.A. recalled that at his first *Eid* prayer in Houston, two hundred other Muslim men, women, and children

³¹ R.K., 17. interview by author, 2 August 2007 (MDA).

³² Z.A., 10. interview by author, 21 January 2007 (MDA).

from various nationalities, though predominantly Indian and Pakistani, were also in attendance.³³ Soon after moving to Houston, Z.A. and his friends formed bridge-playing group, which included a fellow Bihari, two Pakistani Muslims (both *muhajirs*), and one Pakistani Hindu.³⁴ He considered himself a member of multiple overlapping communities—immigrants, South Asians, Indians, Muslims, Indo-Pak Muslims, Sunni Muslims, and eventually Americans and Houstonians—and these identities overlapped at different times. Z.A. recognized a shared experience by immigrants, whether “Biharis or South Asian community or Asia community at large or any Eastern European community—it’s the same story.”³⁵ After so many decades in Houston, Z.A. believed Houston to be his “hometown. It is home now”³⁶ The intersection of national, local, and religious boundaries speaks to the porousness of identity.

This project relies heavily on oral history interviews mainly because very little information on race can be gleaned from other sources. Most of the people with whom I conducted oral history interviews—roughly thirty-five Indian and Pakistani women and men who arrived in Houston between 1960 and 1980—denied that class and especially race had played *any* role at all in their lives. Because learned racial behavior entailed that one not speak openly about race, it became challenging for me to ascertain racial ideas. I approached interviewees without specifically referencing the word “race,” yet race emerged time and again. In the following project, I have tried to avoid over-interpreting

³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁴ *Muhajir*: Muhajir is the term applied to those who migrated from India to newly formed Pakistan in 1947, as opposed to those Sindhis, Punjabis, etc, who already resided in the geographic space allocated to Pakistan.

³⁵ Z.A., interview, 24.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

quotes from interviewees and overstating the relevance of race. I have attempted to allow individuals to speak for themselves and narrate their own ideas.

Another reason I turned to oral histories as a primary source is that the immigrants to whom I spoke were either not comfortable sharing any journals they had written or had not kept a journal. Unlike histories of much earlier time periods, I examine the ideas and behaviors of people who are, mostly, still alive. Understandably, they are hesitant to make public their personal letters or diaries. One immigrant elaborated on that discomfort when she said,

I did have a diary but I found out it's not a good—the diary strictly is mine. If somebody read something they might get a different opinion [so] then I threw away all the diaries. I don't think, if something happens to me, then a person should know a wrong idea or something [about me]. Because a diary is feelings at the time that you're feeling them. Then after, when you're calming down, it might not be true. So one day I thought that and [regarding the feelings expressed in the diary] I thought, 'No, that's not right.'³⁷

This quote exemplifies the turn to oral history interviews when exploring uncomfortable truths, but also the need to view all historical evidence critically. Repeatedly over the course of the interview, this same interviewee expressed how happy she had always been in United States but the above quote shows that at least initially, her experience was not all rosy.

³⁷ C.B., interview by author, 26 June 2007, (MDA). 13.

Other immigrants explained that the use of a diary was foreign to them. When asked whether she kept a diary, N.F. replied, “No. Actually, really, that was not a way of thinking then. You know, diaries and all. When I hear my own granddaughter talk about a diary, I am like ‘we never thought that.’ Actually, I don't even remember that we knew about diaries because that was just a different lifestyle then.... Whatever happened, happened. So, you know, we remember those things” instead of recording them.³⁸ Still others did keep a diary but are unwilling to share them.

At this point, I draw attention to a corollary set of concerns I have had while working on this project. Early in the interview process, I found myself particularly satisfied when interviewees made inflammatory comments about African Americans and Hispanics. The more damning and egregious the indictment against other minority groups, the better I thought the interview went. These were the “gotcha” moments that reaffirmed my thesis on the prevalence of racism among South Asians. But as interviewees continued to invite me into their homes, share their meals and lives with me, I realized that while they held stereotypical ideas about racialized groups in the US, ideas that have been pegged as racist by others such as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Joe Feagin, the people I interviewed were more than a simple label.³⁹ Labeling them as stock racists collapses the complexity of their lives and their struggles. Furthermore, aside from assigning a convenient and simplistic label that actually explains very little, it deflects attention away from other important questions, for example: Are the racial ideologies of

³⁸ N.F., interview by author, 22 January 2007, (MDA). 18-19.

³⁹ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 3rd ed (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010); Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

immigrant groups unique to those groups? What are the virtual wages accrued by the creation of social and physical distance between one's own group and disadvantaged groups in society? What does immigrant adoption of racial ideologies reveal about American, southern, and urban racial landscapes?

My line of questioning was geared toward ascertaining immigrant ideas about race. I found that in interviews wherein I asked direct questions, such as "Since you encountered different ethnic groups for the first time, what were your impressions of the different groups?" interviewees consistently answered favorably: "Oh, everyone was very nice. We had no problems." These were the same interviewees who later in the interview, when probed with questions about school districts or preferred neighborhoods, made very plain their opinions about Latinos or African Americans: "Oh, we would never send our children to that school, with all those Mexicans and *kalloos*" or "After the blacks moved in, the neighborhood really went down."⁴⁰ Occasionally, I encountered an individual who would openly and directly share their opinions with me. These interviews, though riveting and informative, posed several problems. Though the interviews were completely voluntary and interviewees were informed that transcripts would be made public through archives, when a living individual makes comments that could be deemed racist, does the interviewer have a responsibility to protect that individual's identity? If the content of an interview includes only "tame" material such as places of residence or employment, is this the same as interviews containing offensive and inflammatory remarks? This is complicated by some interviewees' tendency to mention their grown children's and

⁴⁰ *Kaloo*: a racially offensive derogatory term directed at people of African descent. The word seems to have come into usage among South Asians in the South Asian diaspora. Its root word is the Sanskrit *kala*, which in Hindi and Urdu refer to the color black.

spouse's names during interviews. In order to avoid embarrassment of interviewees or their family members, I have determined, in the end, to use interviewees' first and last initials instead of full names. The link between name and actual person seems less important than the content of the interviews.

Another complicating factor for oral historians exploring ethnic histories is that of insider privilege. I inhabit and perform several subjectivities, only one of which is shared by all of my interviewees: that of being "South Asian." While I was in a position to understand some of the complexities of their experiences due to my fluency in Hindi-Urdu and familiarity with general cultural practices concerning food, clothing, family structure, gender norms, etc., in so many other ways, depending on who I interviewed, I was an outsider: as a Pakistani-American; as the daughter of *muhajirs* who betrayed the nationalist project of India by migrating to Pakistan; as someone raised in the U.S.; as a student of the liberal arts (as opposed to sciences); as a woman; as a Muslim; and as a Muslima who wears *hijab*.⁴¹ Interviewees navigated varying degrees of openness with me, with some feeling on very familiar terms but others more guarded in their communications. A prime example of this unstable sense of community with me occurred when I interviewed a Madrasi who had lived in the Houston area since 1970.⁴² He greeted me with palpable caution but through the course of small talk and meeting his wife, the interview proceeded well, if a little shorter than other interviews. As I walked out, I thanked him and expressed my appreciation. After a moment's silence, he responded,

⁴¹ *Hijab*: A head covering or veil worn in public by some Muslim women. "hijab, n.". OED Online. December 2012. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.rice.edu/view/Entry/257446?redirectedFrom=hijab> (accessed March 08, 2013).

⁴² Madrasi: a resident or former resident of Madras in southern India.

“You know... you were actually nice.” In saying so, he betrayed his initial assumptions, based on any number of factors—e.g. my name, lack of Indian authenticity, performance of religion, etc.—that I was not a “nice” person.

In southern cities including Houston, under the auspices of Jim Crow segregation, white business owners refused service to dark-skinned Indians unless convinced of their distinction from African-Americans.⁴³ Light-skinned Indians and Pakistanis, eyes darting between signs, stood at the doors of public restrooms, wondering if they were “colored” or “white.”⁴⁴ South Asian students and immigrants faced American Jim Crow and its attendant racial assumptions for the first time, yet they brought with them their own racialized knowledge, especially in regards to whiteness and blackness.⁴⁵ This dissertation investigates the choices made by Indians and Pakistanis as they navigated the shifting terrain of race in the post-civil rights-era South. The opening chapter of this project analyzes the development of modernity and capitalism in India and Pakistan as it produced class stratification and a consumer culture. Chapter two brings into sharper focus the lives of South Asians before migration. The next chapter examines the integral role of education in these immigrants’ lives prior to migration and the role of race in regards to school choice for the second generation, Chapter four looks at residence

⁴³ M.U.K., interviewed by Uzma Quraishi, 21 January 2007; tape and transcript deposited at the M.D. Anderson Library [MDA], University of Houston Libraries, University Archives Collection, Special Collections Department.

⁴⁴ S.J.B., interviewed by Uzma Quraishi, 14 June 2007; interview in author’s possession.

⁴⁵ The terms “Indian,” “Asian Indian,” and “Asian American” will refer to different groups in this paper. “Indian” refers to residents of India who have not migrated. “Asian Indians” refers to immigrants in the US from India. Since most of these people came to the US with the intention of returning to India after pursuing education or careers, it is difficult to ascertain when they committed to remaining in the US. Therefore, the term “Asian American” refers specifically to the children—born or at least reared in the US—of Asian Indians.

patterns in Houston. The fifth and final chapter focuses explicitly on the formation of racial ideologies among South Asian immigrants.

Sociologists Oliver and Shapiro have clearly detailed the accumulation of wealth across generations in their important work, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*.⁴⁶ They show that the successive accrual of wealth—wealth that is handed down from one generation to the next—is the real measure of racial progress. My work concurs with Oliver and Shapiro’s but by incorporating various forms of capital, expands the forms of “wealth” that one generation hands to the next. Middle-class immigrants from India and Pakistan worked hard, sacrificed much, and made economically sound decisions. I do not discount or doubt this. Like Oliver and Shapiro, however, I emphasize that these decisions occurred within global market structures and social hierarchies, and that middle-class families were particularly well-placed to take advantage of such systems. Post-1960 immigrants from India and Pakistan constructed and re-constructed Asian, South Asian, Indian, and Pakistani, as well as more localized ethnic identities, all of which were gendered, and classed, and raced, and rich with complexity. Nevertheless, under close scrutiny, certain patterns emerged. An examination of immigrants’ processes of acculturation highlights patterns of socio-economic mobility, educational attainment, and residential settlement; all of these patterns operated within class and race frameworks. The following chapters reveal how these frameworks intersected to support the accumulation of capital among members of the middle class.

⁴⁶ Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/white Wealth: a New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

Chapter 1

Imagining the Global and the Local through Capital and Place

“We were Bombay people. We liked New York.”¹

—V.K.

S.K. and V.K. moved from Bombay to New York in 1968. They remained there for close to a decade and felt very much at home there. Other interviewees also commented on how distinct Bombay (now Mumbai) was among Indian cities and notably, how similar it was to other large, diverse cities in the world. Former Bombayites often employed the word “cosmopolitan” to describe the city of their childhood. By that, they meant that Bombay, like New York, was a “modern” city—a city that thrived on the

¹ S.K. and V.K., interview by author, 16 August 2011 (M.D. Anderson Library-MDA), 5.

heterogeneity of its inhabitants. Immigrants from the major cities of India and Pakistan found remarkably shared “cosmopolitanisms” between highly urbanized, immigrant-saturated areas. These were spaces that were fueled by economies of difference. S.K. explained, “New York life is for everybody” in that poor, rich, and middle-class found their own way. From his perspective, jobs and accommodation of all types existed, and this, in combination with open movement into any part of the city, expressed support for all “style[s] of life.”² S.K. and V.K.’s impression of a global web of cosmopolitan cities that shared particular, modern forms was only affirmed by their move to a place that they initially perceived as somewhat antithetical to modernity: Houston. Only by the very end of the 1970s did the couple find that Houston more fully became a city evoking the “modern” ethos of Bombay or New York. It was at this point that they believed Houston rotated its gaze outward by economically and socially welcoming outsiders, much as India’s and Pakistan’s major cities had already done.

Houston made real forays into the global market in the late 1960s and 1970s when Shell Oil relocated its headquarters there and major oil companies including Exxon, Texaco, and others established major operations bases in Houston.³ It is probable that Houstonians’ attitudes were somewhat slower in reflecting these economic shifts.⁴ As the K.s arrived at a transformative moment in the city’s expansion, the influx of

² S.K. and V.K., interview, 5.

³ Joe R. Feagin, “The Global Context of Metropolitan Growth: Houston and the Oil Industry,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 90, no. 6 (May 1985), 1218-1219.

⁴ Feagin writes, “When the major oil companies began to develop international operations in the 1920s and 1930s, the city developed ties outside the U.S. economy. By the 1960s and 1970s, Houston had become an international city whose economic base was as much affected by international as by national events,” p.1220. I suggest that the movement of major oil companies to Houston after the 1960s was a watershed in altering Houstonians’ attitudes toward foreigners, in large part because “Houstonians” were themselves increasingly non-native to Houston.

international immigrants and domestic migrants had likely not yet fully registered. For many Indian and Pakistani immigrants, “real” cities—ones that were fulfilling their potential—were imagined as thriving on change, bursting with diverse people, and running on commerce. Those that lacked any of these components or possessed them in small degree could not compare to “great” cities such as London, New York, and Bombay. Bombay, as immigrant P.A. observed, was “a terrific city... more of a melting pot than any other city that I’ve ever been to. People who are from different parts of the country” inhabit Bombay.⁵ Moving from Bombay to College Station, Texas, in 1964, A.S.A. felt insulted and incredulous to be asked about elephants in Bombay.⁶ He recalled that “even the college professors asked me dumb questions, like when I’d say I came from Bombay and I’d say the population at that time was 3 or 4 million people, they would still ask me dumb questions or something.” For example, they asked, ““Do you have elephants on the street?” I mean this is coming from a college professor, you know, with a Ph.D.—a guy who has been around the world asking that type of question!”⁷ For A.S.A., the high population signified modernity, not the type of imagined traditional society wherein elephants paraded the streets. At the very least, sharing information about the high population of Bombay should have alerted the professor, in A.S.A.’s eyes, to the reality of this modernity. A.S.A. further emphasized the level of education, indicating that the lesser educated could be expected to harbor ignorance even in the face of new

⁵ P.A., interview by author, 20 June 2011 (MDA), 1.

⁶ College Station is the location of Texas A&M University, attending in 1964 exclusively by white men and some few international students.

⁷ A.S.A., interview by author, 5 September 2011 (MDA), 11.

knowledge whereas, to him, a professor—one who epitomized the height of modern achievement through knowledge of the world—made no sense.

These modern “global cities” shared similarly capitalistic orientations, laying the foundations for a resurgent globalization.⁸ In this chapter, I examine the evolution of “modernity” in the Indian Subcontinent as referenced through the region’s economic history, growth of class consciousness, and the production of professionalized emigrants. I then proceed to analyze recent ethnic South Asian newspapers in Houston to illustrate one of the ways in which immigrants reinforce the culture of capital in their lives. By offering this juxtaposition of capital as it operates at the macro and micro levels, I demonstrate that immigrants from the major cities of India and Pakistan were fully incorporated participants in modern, capitalist-oriented economies. This familiarity with and foundations in the behaviors so necessary for advancement in such economies aided immigrants in navigating their paths to material success in the United States. As Partha Chatterjee writes, “the modern West has a significant presence in many modern non-Western societies” due to popular familiarity with “modern capitalist democracy.”⁹ This transnational chapter spans the migration process from past to present by focusing on the former two components of this construction: modernity and capitalism.

Unlike South Asian streams of migration to the west coast of North America in the early 1900s or to Great Britain after World War II, South Asian migration to the U.S.

⁸ Where Saskia Sassen emphasizes the “new” interconnectedness of economies, capital, and people around the world, Partha Chatterjee reminds us that nations had far higher rates of foreign investment and migration in the late nineteenth century. Chatterjee, *Politics of the Governed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) 87-90; Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁹ Chatterjee, 3.

between 1960 and 1980 was not a largely rural-to-urban stream. For the most part, Indian and Pakistani immigrants who migrated to the major cities of the U.S. after changes in legislation in 1965 hailed from solidly middle-class or upper-middle class backgrounds in substantially urbanized areas. They emigrated from places like Karachi, Bombay, and Kanpur. Distinct from the Indian aristocracy, India's historically "middle-class elite" has been cast variously as intermediaries between the aristocracy and the colonial administration; as spokesmen for local populations; as powerless; or as autonomous and with increasing class consciousness.¹⁰ In any case, scholarship has mainly focused on the *upper* middle class—either intellectuals in their own vernacular languages (e.g. writers and socio-political commentators) or the subset of English-educated, upper-caste Indians—those intellectuals who were heavily involved in nationalist agitation in the late colonial era.¹¹ Directing attention away from the "few" of the middle class to the "many" of the middle class entails a shift of interest toward salaried employees who neither organized, agitated for, nor engaged in nationalist politicking. They did not necessarily have access to formalized English-medium instruction, though most had some English-language instruction. Nevertheless, they shared with that elite segment of the Indian middle class, a common recourse to the behavior of modernity with its emphasis on education as an entrée to success and a culture of consumption. As Prashant Kidambi shows, consumption had become an essential measure of status for lower middle-class

¹⁰ Sanjay Joshi, "The Spectre of Comparisons: Studying the Middle Class of Colonial India," in *Elite and Everyman* by eds. Amita Baviskar and Raka Ray (New York: Routledge, 2011) 49-53.

¹¹ Joshi, "The Spectre of Comparisons," 57. See, for example: Sanjay Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and David Lockwood, *The Indian Bourgeoisie: A Political History of the Indian Capitalist Class in the Early Twentieth Century* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

Bombayites in the late colonial period.¹² In addition, both middle-class segments commonly articulated values that signified and aimed to preserve their middle-class status. For example, Joshi's work reveals that middle-class Muslims in Lucknow and Delhi during the late nineteenth century recast meanings of the adjective *ashraf* (or *shareef*), newly defined by behavior and accomplishment as opposed exclusively to one's station of high birth.¹³ In the late twentieth century, the use of the word *shareef* continues to demarcate families who ascribe to conservative behavioral conventions and heavily prioritize education.

The boundaries of what is termed "middle class" in this project remain contested, fluid, and dynamic. India and Pakistan's middle class of the 1960s and '70s (like other such categorizations) are better termed "middle classes" as they signify a wide range of occupations, income levels, and public and private discourses. Nevertheless, both before and after migration, members of India and Pakistan's middle classes defined the terms of their class affiliation by combining old and new modes of "appropriate social conduct" that they believed endowed them with class legitimacy.¹⁴ This conduct included educational attainment; aspirations and a sense of entitlement to upward income and occupational mobility; and appropriate social affiliations with *shareef* (respectable) families. This set of "conducts" as espoused by the middle classes often overlapped with

¹² Prashant Kidambi, "Consumption, Domestic Economy, and the Idea of the 'Middle Class' in Late Colonial Bombay," in *The Middle Class in Colonial India* by ed. Sanjay Joshi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 133, 142.

¹³ Sanjay Joshi, "The Spectre of Comparisons: Studying the Middle Class of Colonial India," in *Elite and Everyman: The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Classes* by eds. Amita Baviskar and Raka Ray (New Delhi; New York: Routledge, 2011). 90-91.

¹⁴ Kidambi, "Consumption, Domestic Economy, and the Idea of the 'Middle Class' in Late Colonial Bombay," in *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 135.

discourses embraced by other classes. Indeed, “class” as a hierarchy existed only as intersecting with other hierarchies, including religion and caste. An examination of the various factors that intersected in India and Pakistan to encourage participatory behaviors in the modern economy entails a brief consideration of the economic history of the Indian Subcontinent as it pertains to the establishment and development of a middle class and its consciousness before and after independence.

The recent, post-1990s open embrace of consumption among India’s middle classes has been heavily examined by many scholars; however, this generation’s grandparents from the 1950s onwards were also consumers in modernizing economies. Though a public and private adherence to Nehruvian socialism limited Indians’ access to the full range of consumer choices available to today’s Indian middle class, the most essential markers of middle class identity in the postcolonial era—education and occupation, for example—remained salient.¹⁵ That generation’s middle class, like the contemporary middle class, engaged in a process of decision-making regarding private school options and professions, all of which aimed to maintain class and income security. There exists a continuum between the pathways and practices at play under the colonial economy, the post-independence economy, and the liberalized economy. The “new” middle class eyes new, status-boosting goods, thus performing their “middle class-ness” in novel ways. However, these consumption practices extend out from the older, essential

¹⁵ Leela Fernandes, *India's New Middle Class : Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Kidambi in *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 135-143. I am arguing here that education and occupation are product choices that consumers select in order to maintain class privilege. The range of choices open to consumers of any given class is limited by their socio-economic station.

demands of their middle-class predecessors (e.g. higher education and occupational choice). The newer demands have not replaced older ones but have built on them.

India's middle class locates its origins after the Sepoy Uprising of 1857 and subsequent transition from East India Company management to Crown Colony rule in 1858.¹⁶ The autocratic, colonial system of governance required the growth and participation of a "new" middle stratum that were schooled in the expanding British-modeled network of higher education. Aside from preparing administrators and clerks for the colonial civil service, these colleges also produced bureaucrats, lawyers, doctors, journalists, engineers, teachers, and literary persons.¹⁷ The role of the state in the colonial and postcolonial economies can accurately be described as "overdeveloped" and even limiting or stunting the full growth of the free market. In addition, colonial economies suffer from interdependence on an external (i.e. metropolitan) economy; nevertheless, a growing middle-class supported the routine administration of the state apparatus. Though the British exercised significant dominion over India's economic governance, the colonial government neglected to fully invest in domestic infrastructure (e.g. education). By exacerbating the demise of indigenous cottage industries and extracting a large degree of raw materials for the success of the metropolis over that of the colonized periphery.¹⁸

Despite this, as sociologist Dale Johnson notes, in dependent or colonial territories,

¹⁶ See Barbara Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998).

¹⁷ Dale L. Johnson, ed., *Middle Classes in Dependent Countries* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985), 145.

¹⁸ Moazzem Hossain, Iyanatul Islam, and Reza Kibria, *South Asian Economic Development: Transformation, Opportunities and Challenges* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 15.

“states assume entrepreneurial functions, giving birth to technocratic, managerial, and technical groupings that do not owe their existence to private property.”¹⁹

Based largely on textile manufacturing and railroad construction and management, the state of “semi-industrialization” at independence required and produced a middling class that vacillated between growth and stagnation in the post-colonial era.²⁰ In either case, it never disappeared.²¹ For the purposes of this project, it is important to note that future emigrants to the U.S. hailed from parents and grandparents who had already navigated their way into high and low professional occupations (i.e. straddling the spectrum from clerks to lawyers and everything in between). Post-Independence India is often characterized as a socialist state, though it was not socialist in the absolute sense. Rather, under the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the government operated under a policy of what has been described as “social secularism” in which Nehru stated there was “plenty of room for private enterprise provided the main aim be kept clear.”²² The “main aim” to which Nehru referred was the benefit of society as a whole. Of even greater import than this founding vision was a tightly controlled state apparatus. In post-Independence India, government policy was structured around the fear of “foreign dominance” and the strained state of the post-war economy.²³ Voices in opposition to

¹⁹ Johnson, 15.

²⁰ Bhagwati and Desai (1970), quoted in *South Asian Economic Development: Transformation, Opportunities and Challenges*, eds. Hossain, Islam, and Kibria, 13, 19-20.

²¹ After independence, India built on iron and steel; Pakistan on cotton textiles; while Bangladesh mainly produced jute. Hossain, Islam, and Kibria, 20.

²² J. Nehru quoted in B.R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 175.

²³ Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970*, 160.

Nehru's vision nevertheless advocated for the maintenance of government bureaucratic control *alongside* the exercise of private industry.²⁴

By 1949, despite a stated concern for social justice, Nehru determined that since the government had established control over the economy, the moment had arrived to welcome the investment of foreign capital.²⁵ This policy shift reflected a changing trade relationship with Pakistan and a decrease in export markets.²⁶ Though the degree of state management varied over the coming years, a pattern of the integration of the public and private sectors was established with publication of the First Five Year Plan in December 1952. For almost all of its history since independence, control of the government has been in the hands of the Indian Congress Party of which Nehru was a prominent member.²⁷ Members of Nehru's immediate family including his daughter Indira Gandhi and his grandson Rajiv Gandhi have held the role of prime minister for most of Congress's rule.²⁸ From the earlier years of independence, the Indian economy was linked to global markets—an emergent, moderately industrial, capitalist economy—subject to market trends and cycles.

²⁴ Ibid., 168.

²⁵ Ibid., 170.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Congress was the party which agitated for and secured independence from the British in 1947.

²⁸ Indira Gandhi's administration was marred by her declaration of national Emergency from 1975 to 1977. Though the tenures of Indira and Rajiv were generally stable, both were assassinated by dissidents. For general histories of India after 1947, see Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (1998); and Judith Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 1994).

State intervention, spending, and control contributed to stunted post-colonial economies.²⁹ Despite showing much promise at independence, the economies of South Asia failed to exhibit sufficient growth by the 1970s. By comparison, South Korea—an Asian country that had a lower *per capita* income than Pakistan in 1950 and a more delayed rate of industrialization than the Subcontinent —emerged as a “high-income country” by 2000.³⁰ Immediately after independence, both the Indian and Pakistani governments had adopted a fiscal policy of “import-substituting industrialization,” state ownership of industry, stringent state planning and regulation.³¹ Also, in Pakistan, by contrast, there has long existed an openness between the state and business interests, evidenced by entrenched alliances between bureaucrats, the military, and big business. That the Indian government has more recently embarked on an earnest policy of trade liberalization since the early 1990s, fostering the rapid expansion of the middle class, does not detract from an earlier presence of a middle class—one more closely linked to the structures in place in British India.³² Nevertheless, the foundations of industrialization and the civil service established by British colonial government had produced class stratification from the mid-nineteenth century.

Pakistan materialized in 1947, a nation struggling to establish enduring political and economic systems. Due to the hasty formation of the “Pakistan” idea and the mapping of boundaries, leaders endeavored to conceptualize the new, secular, Muslim

²⁹ Hossain, Islam, and Kibria, 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xiii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9-10; Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970*, 183-185.

³² Tirthankar Roy points out that the “reintegration” of the Indian economy into world markets began informally in the late 1970s but comprehensive trade reform occurred starting in 1992. Roy, *India in the World Economy: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 238.

nation. After its founding, the country transitioned largely from one military dictatorship to another; in the 1960s under Field Marshal Ayub Khan, in the 1970s under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and the 1980s under General Zia-ul-Haque. Since its inception, Pakistan has been characterized as having a strong central government to the exclusion of mass representation. This power bloc was administered much like the colonial system, with decisions regarding national economic development made by the head of government with the support of a crony Civil Service.³³ Some have characterized the postcolonial state that newly emerged as Pakistan in 1947 as “based firmly on the apparatuses, systems of governance, and even the personnel which had been assembled already by the British colonialists.”³⁴ Migrants (*muhajirs*) from northern India and Punjabis held the seat of power in the new Pakistani government and refused to hold general elections, fully aware that because the majority population resided in East Pakistan (“Bangladesh” after the Civil War of 1971), power would be ceded to the Bengalis in the case of open elections.³⁵

The muhajir-Punjabi alliance strategized to build the new nation’s industry (of which it had virtually no foundation at its creation) and worked to stabilize its economy. The Pakistani government implemented a comprehensive industrialization drive, structuring the currency, fiscal policy, and government investment around

³³ Omar Noman, *The Political Economy of Pakistan, 1947-1985* (London: KPI, 1988), 8-10, 28.

³⁴ Johnson, *Middle Classes in Dependent Countries*, 49.

³⁵ In fact, this is precisely this scenario that played out in the first Pakistan general election held in December 1970. When the East Pakistani Awami League party overwhelmingly garnered the majority of national votes (though all from East Pakistan) the leaders of West Pakistan refused to relinquish power, resulting in East Pakistan’s declaration of civil war. With the help of the Indian military, East Pakistan wrested itself free of West Pakistani domination, declaring itself the new nation of Bangladesh. Noman, 43-47. See, also: Richard Sisson, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

industrialization initiatives.³⁶ While these initiatives helped establish Pakistan in the 1950s, they nevertheless neglected key sectors including agriculture and the rural and urban poor. Also, the fear that India would attack Pakistan motivated the Pakistani government to direct the bulk of its resources into defense, rather than in programs for universal education and health.³⁷ The government exhibited a pattern of economic policy that continued to generate wealth for large landowners, the merchant class, and the urban middle class but not to alleviate poverty for the vast majority of the country's inhabitants.³⁸ Wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few families who, between themselves, controlled 70 to 97 percent of all industry, insurance, and banking.³⁹ Wealth was held by *muhajirs* and Punjabis as opposed to indigenous residents of Pakistan.⁴⁰ According to economist Omar Noman, "by 1959, migrants from India controlled over half of Pakistan's industrial assets."⁴¹ These migrants, many of whom had moved to the capital, Karachi, at Partition, also held 70 percent of the jobs in Karachi's industrial sector.

During the 1960s, under the General Ayub Khan, the *per capita* income in Pakistan steadily rose due to growth in both the agricultural and industrial sectors, which in turn was funded in large part by foreign (especially American) aid. The economy underwent a liberalization process, moving from strong bureaucratic control to a more

³⁶ Noman, *The Political Economy of Pakistan, 1947-1985*, 15-16.

³⁷ Ibid., 18-20.

³⁸ Ibid., 18.

³⁹ Ibid., 41. See also Bose and Jalal.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁴¹ Ibid., 20.

market-based economy.⁴² Industrial growth in Pakistan outpaced the average of other countries in Asia. Still, the Ayub government, as well as subsequent administrations, consistently failed to address severe and widening wealth inequalities. Indeed, the Pakistani government of the sixties “consciously promoted inequalities” through adherence to a free-market model that encouraged the “channeling of resources to those classes which have a high savings rate.”⁴³ Those classes included industrial elites, large landowners (especially in Punjab state), and middle class groups such as urban, white collar workers.⁴⁴ It was largely this latter group from which emigrants to the U.S. emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

The rate of industrialization in the Indian Subcontinent under the British corresponded with the geographic location of cities—that is, whether or not they were located close to ports. Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras all developed class-based societies much earlier than inland regions, by some accounts, as early as 1815.⁴⁵ By the time American immigration policy called for the migration of professionals in the mid-1960s, the Indian subcontinent’s middle class had developed a high degree of class consciousness. In a sociological survey conducted in 1966 in metropolitan Madras, Edwin and Aloo Driver found that self-defined members of the middle-class perceived of their class as “economically adequate or comfortable; residing in a house, which is often

⁴² Ibid., 37.

⁴³ Ibid., 40. The model was associated with Harvard economist G. Papanek and Yale-educated Pakistani economist Mahbub-ul-Haque.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁵ S.N. Mukherjee, “Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-1838” in *Elites in South Asia* eds. E. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee (1970), quoted in *Social Class in Urban India* by Edwin Driver and Aloo Driver, 5.

rented; [and] regularly employed.”⁴⁶ They marked themselves as “educated” and “attractive in physical appearance.”⁴⁷ Importantly, they also perceived of themselves as “well-mannered” (*shareef* as discussed elsewhere in this chapter).⁴⁸ By contrast, they found the “lower class” to be “economically destitute” with a tendency to “beg,” and to be “uneducated, unkempt in physical appearance, lazy, and irresponsible.”⁴⁹ They found more in common with the upper class than with the lower class. As an aside, the “lower class” in Madras saw themselves as “hardworking...kind and generous” though “unattractive in physical appearance.”⁵⁰

Regardless of which class an individual placed him/herself, membership was based on achievement (e.g. wealth or education) and personal attributes (such as honesty or helpfulness).⁵¹ Echoing the ideology of the “American Dream,” some Madras respondents believed that Indian society was becoming more “egalitarian” due to “economic development” and mass education.⁵² As one middle-class, older man stated, one could achieve success by “work[ing] hard, and sav[ing] more money. This is a slow process but it is sure.”⁵³ Even some who affiliated themselves with the lower class believed that the key to upward mobility was education; “as one respondent so aptly put

⁴⁶ Edwin Driver and Aloo Driver, *Social Class in Urban India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 19.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 20.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁵¹ Ibid. 26.

⁵² Ibid. 29.

⁵³ Ibid. 31.

it: 'If we have money, we can educate our children. Our [educated] children will obtain better positions in society.'"⁵⁴ Indeed, 58 percent of these urban respondents viewed themselves as surpassing their fathers' level of education even if only nominally.⁵⁵

Educational attainment, however, did not correspond to occupational attainment for all classes equally. Those sons characterized as holding professional, management, or government jobs (i.e. upper or middle class) were far more likely than those in the labor classes (e.g. farmers, mechanics, firemen, sweepers) to remain in their own or ascend into the highest occupational categories, as borne out by the following numbers: for professional employees, between 85 and 99 percent remained in the professional classes, whereas only 19 percent of manual workers rose into professional employment.⁵⁶ Thus, although there existed some degree of upward mobility, class ascendance and maintenance proved more reliable for those who had already secured a place in professional occupations. To reiterate, it was the children of this urbanized, literate, and professionalized segment of Indian and Pakistani society who could avail themselves of post-baccalaureate education and/or American immigration opportunities.⁵⁷

In addition to the establishment of a limited, British colonial, free market in the Subcontinent during the colonial era, India and especially Pakistan developed strategic links to the United States as postcolonial nations. Pakistan faced a multitude of problems

⁵⁴ Ibid. 34.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 46.

⁵⁶ Ibid., re-tabulated from data in Table 4, 47.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that these occupations were quite varied, including at the higher end, for example: architects, chemists, physicians, journalists, and professors. "Lower professional" occupations could be said to include: auditors, clerks, sales workers, and brokers. Also, incomes for the latter set of occupations occasionally overlapped with the higher grade of manual workers, such as electricians and artisans. Driver and Driver, 42.

since its creation, the greatest of which was a “scarcity of capital.” During the Cold War years, it capitalized on its strategic position for the United States. Linkages formed between the United States on the one hand, with India and Pakistan in the post-independence years on the other hand, fostered migratory flows from those countries to the U.S. I suggest that heavy economic assistance and counsel from the U.S. opened ideological pathways that facilitated migratory flows between the two regions. In the case of Pakistan, the exaggerated pursuit of military equality with India drove the Pakistani government into seeking and accepting foreign aid to the extent that it “compromise[ed] its sovereignty and autonomy.”⁵⁸ As historian Ayesha Jalal asserts, “the interplay of domestic, regional, and international factors during the late forties and fifties—in particular the links forged with the USA...served to erode the position of parties and politicians within the evolving structure of the Pakistani state.”⁵⁹ India, despite its official policy of non-alignment with any major power bloc, readily accepted U.S. aid.⁶⁰ Due to its own economic recession in the late 1957, India increased its intake of foreign assistance by forming the Aid-India Consortium in 1958.⁶¹ Of the participating sources of aid (Canada, Britain, U.S., West Germany, and the World Bank), the U.S. “remained the largest single source of external financial assistance and commodity flows.”⁶² Between

⁵⁸ Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 54; Brecher and Abbas (1972), quoted by Muhammad Shahidullah, “Class Formation and Class Relations in Bangladesh” in *Middle Classes in Dependent Countries*, ed. Dale Johnson, 151.

⁵⁹ Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, 54.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970*, 182.

1947 and 1961, India received \$3,270 million from the United States. Pakistan meanwhile received \$1,474 million.⁶³

Aside from providing economic assistance, the U.S. advised both countries regarding a range of concerns, as far-reaching as economic plans and as focused as higher education. A “Harvard advisory group” aided Pakistan’s commission tasked with writing the country’s first five-year plan, and suggested that 35 percent of the country’s capital development be financed by the U.S.⁶⁴ The increased economic, cultural, physical, or military presence of nations in other nations contributes to ideological connections between regions (e.g. Vietnam War), rendering migration normative. Since its rise to dominance in the late-nineteenth century, U.S. expansion of its trade network has fostered such networks of migration, for example, from the Philippines following the Spanish-American War, and from Korea after the Korean War.⁶⁵ Obviously, other factors such as unemployment, economic malaise, or wartime upheaval are significant but as others have noted, “While the nature and extent of these linkages vary from country to country, a common pattern of expanding U.S. political and economic involvement with

⁶³ Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*, 35. These figures are Jalal’s calculations. According to USAID figures, between 1946 and 1961, Pakistan accepted \$1,429 million in aid while India received \$2,696 million. From “Standard Country Report,” retrieved on 2/22/13 at www.gbk.eads.usaidanet.gov/query/do.

⁶⁴ Jalal, 150. See also K. Sathasivam, *Uneasy Neighbors: India, Pakistan and US Foreign Policy* (Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005).

⁶⁵ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (New York; Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989); Moon-Ho Jung, “Seditious Subjects, Race, State Violence, and the U.S. Empire,” *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 14, no. 2 (June 2011), 231.

emigrant-sending countries emerges.”⁶⁶ The U.S. entered into future emigrants’ spheres of knowledge in many ways, as will be demonstrated in the following vignettes. These representations also illustrate how Texas, Houston, and the South were situated in immigrants’ constructions of “cosmopolitanism” and “modernity.”

I.S. and her husband M.S. had a young daughter when they decided to move to Houston from Karachi. M.S. sought additional training in his field of power engineering, and after receiving admission to the University of Houston, they moved to Houston in 1968. Though I.S. knew little of the city prior to arrival, she had a clear impression of the United States, which she characterized as a place of “richness and freedom.”⁶⁷ She had heard first-hand accounts of the U.S. from “people talking. Sometimes when we were in college, somebody came for education over here [to the U.S.]. [Also] the professors they [came] back and they told us that [American] people are helpful.” She continued, “Sometimes you read articles or listen to the radio. [The] TV station was not there when I left Pakistan. It opened after a couple of months so I cannot say that I watched any TV programs, no.”⁶⁸ I.S. had access to networks of knowledge, the kinds of social networks that according to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, enables access to privilege (in some degree or another). The professors and friends who had traveled to the U.S. could provide her with basic information and experiences.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: New Press, 1998), 40. See also, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System; Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

⁶⁷ I.S., interview by author, 18 July 2007 (MDA), 19-20.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Pierre Bourdieu. “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* by J. Richardson, ed. (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258.

Likewise, Indian immigrant A.S.A. lived in Bombay. A.S.A.'s "father was a lawyer and his clients were mostly business people. Their kids used to go to most of the regular schools like Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin, that area." This was how his father, a lawyer, learned about educational opportunities in American universities and subsequently encouraged his son to apply in 1967. Initially, A.S.A. had anticipated attending university in the United Kingdom, but his father suggested that "all my friends' kids are going to the U.S., so you should go to the U.S." as well.⁷⁰ Enough of these friends' children attended universities in the U.S. that they were perceived by Ajkaokar and likely, others, as "regular schools." By contrast, the most disadvantaged members of any society neither have access to such networks of knowledge nor do they have the capital with which to undertake migration.⁷¹ The normalization of American higher education, the inroads to information about the application process, and the economic capital to make higher education a reality represent a degree of class privilege.

Well before ever planning to migrate, I.S. believed that the U.S. was "a very rich country...a democratic country." She had heard stories of the U.S. being so rich that "even the postmen, [when] they come and deliver the mail, they have a car. At that time, [this] was not imaginable in Pakistan."⁷² By the mid-1960s, when I.S. migrated, the U.S. had long been recognized as a global power. The country's extraordinary growth after

⁷⁰ A.S.A. interview, 5.

⁷¹ Douglas S. Massey, et al, "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal," (2-28) in Mohsen M. Mobasher and Mahmoud Sadri, *Migration, Globalization, and Ethnic Relations* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson, 2004). According to the microeconomic model of neoclassical migration theory, individuals calculate how much they can invest in migration against how much their immigrant employment will yield. This assumes that future migrants *must* have access to information networks and capital, even if capital on loan.

⁷² I.S., interview, 65.

World War II cemented its reputation as an economic leader. In her description of how she imagined the U.S., it is revealing that I.S. was completely familiar with this language of modernity. As John Bodnar noted in his landmark work, *The Transplanted*, immigrants in the industrial era migrated not for reasons of American exceptionalism, but for reasons of labor, as “children of capitalism.”⁷³ For post-1965 immigrants as well, the economic opportunities of this wealthy nation took precedence over the ideals of the nation. Notions of freedom and democracy resonated with I.S., but she tended to name them as secondary to the material conditions of the U.S. Whereas “middle- and lower-middle” class immigrants at the turn of the century were able to secure employment to a large extent in manufacturing—the sector most in need of labor in a rapidly industrializing nation—sixty years later, a transitional American economy increasingly relied on knowledge-based skills and provided middle-class, highly educated immigrants with employment that utilized their expertise.⁷⁴ South Asians who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s were particularly suited to avail themselves of the changing economy.

For many immigrants, “America” was imagined in familiar frames of reference—frames that captured the structure and economic realities of their own societies. These impressions were pieced together from visitors’ travel narratives, guest speakers from the U.S., linkages formed as a result of U.S. ties in Asia, and from American news articles, literature, and films. Future emigrants consumed these forms of print and visual media and listened to these personal narratives of everyday experiences forming fragmentary

⁷³ John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 1. Of course, refugees and forced migrants can be regarded as exceptions to the “children of capitalism” argument. On the other hand, it is often in the interest of free markets that wars are waged and in the case of the U.S., for example, millions of Africans enslaved.

⁷⁴ Bodnar, 13.

images of American life worlds. I.S. characterized the U.S. as land of bounty and opportunity, terms that resonated with her (and others) since many immigrants in Karachi found the budding city a haven for entrepreneurial growth opportunities.⁷⁵ For example, A.H.K.'s father established a highly successful book publishing business in Karachi after working as a clerk in India. The newly created state of Pakistan opened up "business opportunities created by the departure of the Hindus and Sikhs."⁷⁶ Choosing to migrate to the U.S. fit within this framework in which middle-class families constantly sought and struggled to maintain class status and income. As such, studying in and/or moving to America—popularly imagined as "a land of opportunity"—made sense. At the same time, these fragments of information were not always so rosy or so generalized. For many, migration to Houston confirmed fears about the American South. In contemporary times, Houston is regarded as somewhere between South and West, encapsulating features of southern society but remaining firmly rooted in the imperatives of development and profit, no matter the cost.⁷⁷ Even in India and Pakistan, so far from the U.S., articulations of what America was and what it aspired to be, circulated publicly. Houston was both a place admired (because of NASA) and feared (because of its place in Texas and the South).

In November 1963, A.S.A. received word in Bombay of his admission to graduate studies in engineering at Texas A&M University. He had first considered applying to universities in London but at his father's suggestion, redirected his search toward the U.S.

⁷⁵ See Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 121.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Opportunities for upward mobility were especially available to middle-class *muhajirs* (migrants from India) who had completed urban-to-urban migrations to Karachi and other large cities in Pakistan.

⁷⁷ Martin V. Melosi and Joseph A. Pratt, *Energy Metropolis* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), Introduction.

He chose the school because a family friend was enrolled there. En route to saying goodbye to his grandmother who lived in southern Maharashtra state at some distance from Bombay, he learned something of Texas:

We stopped where my father had gone to college in Kolhapur and there we were staying with one of our friends for two days. Then we visited his old professor and as soon as my father said, “Yeah, he’s going to go to U.S.,” [the professor asked,] “where are you going?” We said, “Texas,” and that’s the day Kennedy was assassinated. I mean, so we heard the news from him because when you’re away you don’t listen to the radio and all that. So that’s how we heard and so everybody was scared. *Everybody thought Texas was—everybody’s carrying a gun and shoots anyone that doesn’t listen*, so to speak.... It was a cultural shock because all our definition of the U.S. was what we see in Hollywood films, right? In those days, if you recall, the films were mostly shot in New York as the background.”⁷⁸

In the popular imagination, be it national or global, the Kennedy assassination affirmed Texas as a place of violence—a place unlike progressive, modern New York. Indeed, New York seemed to represent the United States broadly, while Texas and the South seemed anomalies in an otherwise welcoming, tolerant society. I.S. remarked that she believed America to be “a crime-free country,” where literally, “there are no crimes in

⁷⁸ A.S.A., interview, 6. Emphasis mine.

America.”⁷⁹ She explained, “That’s what we learned, you know. You leave the things outside and nobody will even look at it or touch it.”⁸⁰ Continuing, she explained:

Well, I came to Houston in December 1967, and if I recall it right, it was in April 1968 that Martin Luther King was assassinated. And after a couple of months, Robert Kennedy, President Kennedy's younger brother, he was assassinated. I think it was within 6 months of all that. So, Mr. Hussein’s wife, [a friend] from Germany, she said jokingly, ‘You must have a very good impression of America—two people assassinated.’ Then, I found out that America is not crime-free! [laughs]⁸¹

It was no coincidence that both of these civil rights-era deaths occurred in the South. I.S. was, no doubt, very much aware of the political context surrounding the assassinations. It is reasonable to surmise that I.S. connected acts of violence (or as she phrased it, “crime”) with the U.S. but specifically, with the South. Whether Houston fit neatly in the modern, progressive, imagined America or the pre-modern, violent, imagined South varied from person to person. I.S. felt that Houston was something of an oasis of hospitality. She and her husband had briefly moved to Toronto but had found a somewhat antagonistic climate. They willingly returned to Houston a few months later.

⁷⁹ I.S., interview, 19.

⁸⁰ I.S., interview 19-20.

⁸¹ Ibid., 34

Conversely, S. K., who lived in Houston for seven months in 1976 and returned permanently in 1980, compared his experiences. Initially moving from a decade of living in New York, S. K. found Houstonians to be “uncosmopolitan” and “rough.” Speaking about his experience at Bechtel, an international engineering and construction company, he explained that people,

in New York, they’re very cosmopolitan, they accept [outsiders]. Their attitude is to accept. And our office in New York transferred me to Houston. So in ’76 and ’77 Houstonians, Texans, they’re very rough. They cannot accept outsiders. So once you stay in New York eight years, to come to Houston in ’77, I didn’t like it... No kind of manners or anything and they would talk and treat you like something different.⁸²

At this point in the interview, S.’s wife, V., countered that “maybe *he* found that in his office, [but] not everywhere.” S. immediately interjected passionately that anti-immigrant sentiment existed not only in the workplace but “Everywhere! Everywhere!”⁸³ V. reasoned that her opposing view must have resulted from her not working at the time. S. agreed, stating that “ladies, they are not exposed to outside. Gents, they face this and to live this every time, you know this is very difficult,” at which point, V. conceded.⁸⁴

⁸² S.K. and V.K., interview, 6.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. The exact exchange is as follows:

SK: At work these people are really rough. No kind of manners or anything and they would talk and treat you like something different.

Individual experiences varied within families and between genders. Although V. quickly qualified her positive narratives of early life in Houston, her own experiences were as legitimate as her husband S.'s. All of the women I interviewed came to Houston as a result of marriage or husband's job transfer, often enrolling in English-language classes, joining campus cultural organizations, but generally not working outside the home initially. Their initial impressions of Houston often differed vastly from their husbands' experiences at the workplace. South Asian women generally reported friendlier interactions with white-American neighbors, often forming close friendships with at least one female neighbor. They found that women at the churches where they attended English-language classes to be extremely warm and helpful.

S. K. however, was so disheartened by the treatment he received in Houston that he opted for a transfer to Louisville, Kentucky, where he found people to be "very friendly."⁸⁵ By the time he returned to Houston four years later, S. discerned a "noticeable change" that he attributed to the influx of large, international companies and hence, greater numbers of foreigners in labor and management.⁸⁶ When asked to explain why he thought such differences existed, S. reflected that "every place has special qualities" and that Texas, perhaps due to its size, was isolated from the rest of the country. At work, he said, Houstonians wore "cowboy attire" complete with bolo ties and

VK: Maybe *he* found that in his office, not everywhere.

SK: Everywhere! Everywhere!

VK: Because for me I was not working at that time.

SK: Right but ladies, they are not exposed to outside. Gents, they face this and to live this every time, you know, this is very difficult.

⁸⁵ S.K. and V.K., interview, 11.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 7.

“gumshoes,” an indication that Texans “were not ready to accept the modern world.”⁸⁷ In Texans’ eyes through the mid-1970s, S. surmised, “Texas was the only place... in the world” and its natives were in a “hard shell” and “never came out.” They were “rigid”⁸⁸ Unsure of how this reflected upon or connected to the rest of the South, S. concluded that “Texas is a big place in [the] South and we experienced this roughness.”⁸⁹ Others, too, perceived that Houston was uniquely aggressive. Before U.M. moved to Houston, his co-workers in the northern U.S. “felt it was— there was more a gun culture in Houston and they found that to be quite alarming. They felt like it was more common in this area for people to own guns and they were not that used to it” in the North.⁹⁰ Z.A. suggested that Chicago, where he first arrived in 1971, was more “cultured” than Houston—referring to the wide availability of Indian cultural events (e.g. ethnic entertainment shows and community-wide socials) as compared to Houston, though perhaps also an assessment of city-wide events.⁹¹

As perceptions were borne of local experience, immigrants often compared Houston to their points of arrival (if they moved to Houston via some other location) and their points of departure. A.K., a Bombayite who lived in Norman, Oklahoma, for six months between 1970 and 1971 regarded Houston as “the closest civilized metropolis” and gladly made the shift.⁹² Having also lived in London and experienced residential

⁸⁷ Ibid., 12-13.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁰ U.M., interview by author, 5 October 2011 (MDA), 13.

⁹¹ Z.A., interview by author, 21 January 2007 (MDA), 26-7.

⁹² A.K., interview by author, 2 August 2007 (MDA), 6.

discrimination and an openly hostile atmosphere, he was relieved to find Houstonians warm and welcoming. Arriving in 1971, P.B., a young wife from Delhi and Madras, was particularly struck by “the newness of the whole city... There were no buildings with age showing either in terms of the architecture or in terms of water that has stained the walls.”⁹³ In the places that P.B. and her husband chose to live, work, and socialize, they appreciated the fresh, untainted feel of the growing city. Her husband’s employer, Shell Oil, moved him from California to Houston, where his wife joined him. With the income of a white collar professional with an advanced degree in engineering from Berkeley, the P.B.s opted to reside in the Fondren Southwest area before moving to a very affluent neighborhood in Sugar Land.⁹⁴ Contrary to P.B.’s impression of Houston, the city had very impoverished (and deteriorating) areas even in the 1970s, for example, the neighborhoods of Settegast and Riceville.⁹⁵ South Asian immigrants at that time, however, possessed higher education and consequently economic capital, and could thus afford to bypass and overlook the substandard living conditions in many areas of Houston, perceiving only a shiny, new city. As Robert Thompson notes, “Shell employees and their families, like many other immigrants to Houston, would never have

⁹³ P.B., interview by author, 11 July, 2007 (MDA), 12.

⁹⁴ The P.B.s lived in the Glenshire subdivision. Their son first attended private Montessori pre-school, then Bell Elementary School, and one year at Welch Middle School (both public) before completing his remaining years at the St. John’s School, one of Houston’s most elite private schools. P.B., 21.

⁹⁵ City reports indicate that homes in these areas lacked running water, had open sewage disposal systems, and unpaved roads. Incidentally, the Riceville area was located just 2 miles south of the very middle-class neighborhood Fondren Southwest and Sharpstown. Roads and buildings were developed *around* the area. See The Handbook of Texas Online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hrrsm>, retrieved on 4 March 2013; and Robert D. Bullard, *Invisible Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987).

to see much of the city anyway; they found themselves in suburban developments built specifically for the city's well-to-do newcomers."⁹⁶

Eventually, even those who had initially considered Houston unpleasant discerned a palpable change by 1980. Reflecting back on their early years in Houston, V.K. mused that "we like Houston because we have a big community here," one that nurtured her children as they grew up. Her husband added "another thing," noting that Houston is the "fourth largest city in the country, most reasonable price-wise, tax-wise, housing, and everything... so cost of living, cost of housing, and that is a very main factor."⁹⁷ Some immigrants moved to nearby cities such as Dallas and many returned home to India and Pakistan. Others were offered opportunities to relocate elsewhere through their places of employment. Increasingly however, Indian and Pakistani immigrants found employment in Houston and remained. As long as the economy remained vibrant as it did through the early 1980s, Houston seemed an ideal location, particularly for those in the upwardly mobile, primary labor market.

Thus far, the immigrants in this project have been portrayed as having some degree of wealth from very early on in the immigration process—a baseline of capital upon which to establish their class standing. The following section demonstrates the specific material circumstances of Indian and Pakistani immigrants at or near their time of migration to the U.S. By detailing the experiences of a few immigrant families, a narrative arc of meager beginnings but rapid mobility emerges. These experiences

⁹⁶ Robert S. Thompson, "The Air Conditioning Capital of the World: Houston and Climate Control" in Melosi and Pratt (2007), 100.

⁹⁷ S.K. and V.K., interview, 4.

translate South Asian immigrants' cosmopolitan imaginings to capitalist realities, reinforcing the link between the two.

A.H.K. married her husband M.U.K., in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1968.⁹⁸ At the time, M.U.K. was a part-time doctoral student in science education at the University of Houston, making a short visit to Karachi. By the time A.H.K.'s visa papers to enter the United States were processed, they had welcomed a baby boy. In 1970 in the earliest months of her arrival, A.H.K., who already spoke English and had a master's degree in biology, stayed at home with her son and attended church-run "cultural" classes. They lived in a small, one-bedroom apartment in the Montrose area of Houston. In 1971 they both had found employment as medical technicians, earning \$199 per month. A.H.K. recalled that potential employers told her that she was overqualified for higher paying work, and so she settled for "some medical technician job where I was not making enough money." Frustrated with the low-end work and pay, she and M.U.K. enrolled in medical technologist training in August of 1972. In the meantime their total monthly income equaled \$399 and their annual joint salary \$4,788 at a time when the median income in the U.S. was \$11,549 for white Americans and \$7,106 for black Americans.⁹⁹ At some point the owner of their apartment complex asked M.U.K. if he would work as an on-site manager, mainly fielding maintenance calls, and thereby slightly reducing their monthly rent. Within that \$399, A.H.K. and M.U.K. paid for rent and groceries, and remitted money to his widowed mother and six siblings in Karachi. "We didn't have

⁹⁸ The following vignette is compiled from the separate oral history interviews by the author with: A.H.K., 17 July, 2007 (MDA) and M.U.K., 21 January 2007 (MDA).

⁹⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Current Population Reports: Consumer Income," Table 8: Families by Total Money Income in Constant Dollars by Race of Head (1972) <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/popscan/p60-087.pdf>, retrieved 4 March 2013.

enough,” A.H.K. stated plainly.¹⁰⁰ “With that little money which we were making, it was very hard to manage ourselves and the family back there.”¹⁰¹ They successfully looked for related work and were thus able to each increase their pay to \$399 per month.

A.H.K. and M.U.K. remained in the Montrose apartment for about three years (until 1973), at which point M.U.K.’s younger brother joined them from Pakistan. They moved to a two-bedroom apartment near Stella Link and Braeswood, in near-southwest Houston, which they could afford to do due to their securing new jobs after completion of their training. They now earned \$650 each as medical technologists. A.H.K. received offers from Texas Children’s Hospital and Methodist Hospital but she declined them because she enjoyed her new friends in the microbiology department at Ben Taub Hospital. In 1974 A.H.K. and M.U.K. took out a loan to purchase their first home in the new neighborhood of Maplewood, adjacent to Meyerland, a largely Jewish area. On the advice of friends, M.U.K. began investing money in stocks in the mid-1970s. In 1977, the year M.U.K. completed his doctorate, he purchased a second, rental property—a townhome in far southwest Houston. After three years M.U.K. and A.H.K. decided to move to the Middle East for twelve years, where M.U.K. worked as a professor of medical technology and A.H.K. again found employment as a medical technologist. They had placed their Houston home on rent and upon returning to Houston in 1992, moved back into it. By that time, M.U.K. had earned enough money from his stock investments that he proceeded to purchase inexpensive, foreclosed houses, renovate them, and rent them out. Since these funds were sufficient to cover their expenses, M.U.K. decided to

¹⁰⁰ A.H.K., interview, 16.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

retire. A.H.K. had stopped working a few years prior. Though they do not regard themselves as wealthy, they are proud that they do not want for money.

I.S. and her husband, M.S., moved to Houston in the mid-1960s. M.S. worked on his bachelor's degree in engineering while I.S. remained at home with their young daughter. I.S. had completed her master's degree from Karachi University in Islamic Studies. When they first settled in Houston, "there were financial hurdles."¹⁰² At first they could not afford a car and used public transport instead. Because her husband aimed to finish his bachelor's degree in a timely manner, he worked part-time. I.S. explained, "You had to watch your budget." In 1970 the couple and their young children moved to College Station, where M.S. would complete his master's degree in industrial engineering. There, they lived in university housing in which:

the rents were really low. It was very helpful, \$48 utilities paid. No air-conditioning, of course. No carpeting. It was small. It was the cheapest one in which we were living. Two bedrooms, furnished, but you can imagine: a two-seater sofa (small one) and one chair (rocking chair, wood) and a small dining table with four chairs, and we were blessed with a bed. That is what we had.¹⁰³

Eventually, I.S. and M.S. had saved enough money to purchase a second-hand vehicle. "We had an old car which used to stop everywhere. It used to heat up. I don't know how many times we had to leave the car on the road!" M.S. completed his master's degree in 1972 and after brief bouts in Karachi and Canada, secured full-time employment in 1975

¹⁰² I.S., interview, 37.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

in the Houston company where he had previously worked. He established his own air conditioning systems consulting firm in 1980. After their three children were in school, I.S. often worked on record-keeping at M.S.'s company. After twenty years of running the company, M.S. entered into a life of semi-retirement.

These two families typify the material experience of other immigrants from India and Pakistan in the sixties and seventies. Though their narratives highlight lean times in their early years as student-immigrants, it is far more significant that not only were they active participants in modern economies and modern sectors of their societies, that these behaviors (e.g. seeking higher education, investment, entrepreneurship) secured economic mobility very quickly. Without disparaging the genuine sacrifices made by these hard-working immigrants, it is nevertheless apparent that, as members of an educationally committed middle class in their sending countries, they arrived with the cultural capital to rise up. Their technical skills and language fluency helped facilitate the process. Within the middle class, they spanned a full range of backgrounds, from lower to upper middle class, which meant that some necessarily had to live in more circumscribed situations for longer than others. The more privileged their origins, the higher their rates of success in the U.S. Those with the highest levels of financial success also gained access to privileged, almost exclusively white social circles in the U.S. Sometimes that privilege shielded upper-middle class immigrants from discrimination. Always, it shaped their perspective and immigration narrative.

As P.B., a very affluent Asian Indian woman, stated, "I know there have been issues for others, from hearsay, from descriptions that others have narrated, incidents either at work, they were passed over or didn't feel that their work was as well-

recognized.”¹⁰⁴ But she did not experience any hostility herself. Rather, she professed to the opposite: easy access to Houston’s elite groups. Both P.B. and her husband came from upper middle-class backgrounds in India. P.B.’s son attended a prestigious private school where she crossed paths with parents who held positions in Houston’s elite arts and philanthropic institutions. As she and her husband developed friendships with these parents, they invited P.B. to participate in their philanthropic efforts. After some time, P.B. was invited to join various boards of directors, including the Houston Ballet and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH).¹⁰⁵ While P.B. was somewhat exceptional in terms of her socio-economic status (her husband had risen to the highest ranks in a major oil company), her volunteer efforts have impacted the outside perception of Indians among Houston’s privileged society, leading to the opening of the Arts of India collection at the MFAH.¹⁰⁶ This, in turn, led the MFAH to place “an Indian on the board [of trustees] because they see the community as a vibrant community that is able to support and participate in the Museum.”¹⁰⁷ P.B.’s experience shows the significance of social capital and the global circulation of class as a common language. Though many South Asians have not had the opportunity to navigate the upper echelons of American society, those with prior induction in such circles in India and Pakistan have more easily navigated analogous circles in the U.S. because of prior initiation into modern, capitalist economies.

¹⁰⁴ P.B., interview, 23.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁶ It is interesting that the wing is named Arts of India, not South Asia. Yet curiously, during the oral history interview P.B. mentioned that the “the India/Pakistan gallery will open towards the end of 2008.” P.B., interview, 33.

¹⁰⁷ P.B., interview, 33.

Immigrants who arrived from more modest backgrounds but who succeeded in acquiring large amounts of economic capital after migration also experienced the magnification of other forms of capital, including access to elite networks. Pakistani immigrant G.B. arrived in Houston in 1973 at the age of seventeen. Either because he could not gain admission to or afford the higher tuition at the University of Houston-Main Campus, he attended UH-Downtown. After three years he dropped out to become a small businessman, though eventually, a very successful entrepreneur. He came from what he calls a “middle-class family” but then clarifies that “there is no such thing called middle-class family [in Pakistan]. It is either you are rich or you are poor” so by that logic, he regarded his family as poor.¹⁰⁸ A strong believer in the American Dream, G.B.’s life journey seems to corroborate the ideal that if one works hard in America, one finds success, and that is all it takes. A closer analysis reveals that G.B. hailed from a business-oriented family in which “quite a bit of people were in business,” so at the very least, he already had that role modeling and some entrepreneurial know-how prior to migrating.

G.B. became a millionaire within two decades of migration but views himself as a “mainstream guy.” He defines this as “running the public companies, sitting on different mainstream boards.”¹⁰⁹ He exhorts others to “just get involved” in the “mainstream,” lamenting that people “isolate [them]selves.”¹¹⁰ G.B. cites his own example, stating that it is simply a matter of choice whether or not one “gets involved.” Bemoaning the lack of

¹⁰⁸ G.B., interview by author, 19 July 2007 (MDA), 3. This statement reflects the relative nature of the term “middle class.” G.B. compared the middle class in Pakistan with their counterparts in the U.S., in which case the former has had a much lower income. However, when compared internally to the income of other domestic residents, the class status and privilege of the South Asian middle class become far more apparent.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 26, 28.

¹¹⁰ G.B., interview, 28.

Pakistani participation in local philanthropic efforts, he rationalizes, “I used to sit on all those different boards and learn so much from people and have connections with people where our people are still lacking.”¹¹¹ The “mainstream” to which G.B. refers is boards of directors where the wealthy network among themselves and for which large amounts of wealth are a prerequisite. Not all South Asians have the economic capital needed to participate in these networks. That there are economic divides in modern society is not in the least bit notable; rather, it is significant that at least some of those on the upside of these divides share the perception that participation is equally available to anyone who desires it. P.B. acknowledged that some South Asian immigrants “didn’t get into any of these committees so easily,” attributing ease of access to immigrants’ individual “levels of participation and comfort,” rather than possession of cultural, economic, and social capital.¹¹²

In 1972 four Indian immigrants opened Maharajah, the first Indian restaurant in Houston.¹¹³ They chose to locate the restaurant in Rice Village on Times Boulevard. It remained open for four years to a mostly white American clientele. The restaurant also hosted any visiting Indian dignitaries or artists such as Indian classical dancer turned vegetarianism spokesperson, Rukmini Devi and Indian ambassadors traveling to Houston. Co-owner A.K. recalled that “Indians didn’t much care for our cooking but non-Indians loved it.”¹¹⁴ During its first two years of operation, the engineers-turned-

¹¹¹ Ibid., interview, 28-9.

¹¹² P.B., interview, 22-3.

¹¹³ A.K., interview, 15.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 17, 19; Also, R.K., interview, 8. According to R.K., Devi served as “head of the Vegetarian Congress and she had come to Houston a couple of times with “a big delegation” (R.K., 8).

restaurateurs enjoyed brisk business and long wait-lines but found the challenges of managing a restaurant unsustainable.¹¹⁵

The location and clientele of Maharajah offer multiple lines of analysis. The area surrounding Rice University was largely white and upper-middle class. By locating their restaurant there, the Indian owners appealed to that particular public, revealing not just their preferred market but the ways in which they imagined themselves as belonging. To some extent, racially and economically, educated Indians projected a sense of belonging in the space they created. This is indicated in A.K.'s comment regarding the restaurant's closing: "When it shut down, we had a big, black tie morning session and all that . . . lots of Americans. All the Montrose gang was there."¹¹⁶ The use of the markers "American" and "the Montrose gang" exclusively signified whiteness to A.K. The "black tie" session reflects a class posturing though perhaps less so than the actual celebration of the restaurant closing. Secure in their ability to acquire salaried employment, these middle-class, educated immigrants could engage in marking the "failure" of their entrepreneurial enterprise with some measure of gaiety. Though they "often gather and have a good laugh about it" and "can now talk about it in all fun and glory," it is not only in memorializing the event that they revel.¹¹⁷ At the time, they could literally afford to celebrate the loss.

Wealth and status alone, being locally constructed categories, could not automatically ensure ready acceptance of immigrants. C.B., whose natal family she

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 15-16.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 17.

described as “very wealthy,” had no English-medium schooling.¹¹⁸ Since accent is cultural capital, her heavily accented English hindered her assimilation. She says, “I had the acquaintance to go to higher society parties. I felt a little like I was an outsider ... You do feel it because people simply do not understand your accent. They’re not as familiar with foreign people as much at a higher level [of society].”¹¹⁹ C.B. was referring to the intersection of whiteness and wealth that she has encountered, where non-whites and non-Americans were fewer in number, and where certain accents were valued above others (e.g. French or upper-caste, English-educated South Asian). Though her status as a successful small-business owner established in-roads to otherwise exclusive engagements, she felt uncomfortable without the requisite cultural capital required for significant acceptance in these circles.

Thus far, in illustrating the central argument of this chapter—that due to their class status, middle-class Indian and Pakistani immigrants entered the U.S. as active beneficiaries of class-structured societies and consequently, inculcated the strategies necessary for success as newcomers in the U.S.—I have provided a broad economic and social framework, as well as a tapestry of individual perceptions. Next, we turn to an analysis of South Asians and the relational nature of middle-class consumption practices and ethnicity. Again enlarging the scope of investigation, the ensuing passages evaluate how South Asians as a group produce and commodify ethnic culture through the medium of ethnic newspapers in the very recent past. One of the ways in which the culture of capital is reinforced and reproduced for ethnic and other communities is through the

¹¹⁸ C.B., interview by author, 26 June 2007 (MDA), 25.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 14.

circulation of community newspapers. Ethnic South Asian newspapers serve the vital functions of disseminating information about weekly local events, the latest political and cultural developments in South Asia, as well as focusing attention on local and national issues that directly concern South Asian Houstonians. The development of a heritage economy can be found in other immigrant ethnic enclaves as well. Historian Lizabeth Cohen shows that working-class European immigrants in early twentieth-century America practiced similar patterns of mass consumption. Cohen writes that “manufacturers, merchandisers, advertisers, employers, and social critics...promoted this ideal of twentieth-century American as an egalitarian mass consumer society.”¹²⁰ Whether or not ethnic individuals shared real or imagined origins, the “labor market was shaped by specific socio-cultural features.”¹²¹ Print and broadcast media help shape this labor market.

In 1982 K.L. Sindwani began publishing *Indo-American News*, the first broadly circulated newspaper in Houston’s Indian community. First published as an English-language biweekly, the newspaper became a weekly in 1985. By 2010 it boasted a circulation of 5,000, including paid subscriptions but mainly distributed free to the community through various Indian and Pakistani businesses. Published since 1987, the larger *Voice of Asia*, reported a readership of over 45,000 people in 2010, while the *India*

¹²⁰ Lizabeth Cohen, “The Class Experience of Mass Consumption: Workers as Consumers in Interwar America,” in eds., Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, *The Power of Culture in American History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), 136.

¹²¹ Antoine Pecoud, “Thinking and rethinking Ethnic Economies,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* (Winter 2000), 454-55.

Herald ran 3,000 copies.¹²² While all three weeklies included coverage of local community events, news from South Asia, and Indian entertainment (among other subjects), ethnic newspapers with wide distribution were primarily business ventures. They had small staffs ranging from five to nine people, surviving on profits earned from advertisements and less so, from subscriptions. According to Sindwani, 90 percent of the paid subscribers and paying advertisers of *Indo-American News* were Indian, as opposed to “South Asian.” However, South Asians, broadly conceived, did comprise a substantial portion of the “free” readership. Consequently, the editors of all three papers allocated one to two pages per issue to news from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.¹²³ Unlike newspapers for other Asian ethnic groups including Vietnamese, Chinese, and Mexicans in Houston, Indian ethnic newspapers were printed entirely in English.

The two main Asian Indian newspapers in Houston, *Indo-American News* and *Voice of Asia*, were distributed free of charge at Indian and Pakistani grocery stores and restaurants. By 1985 several Indian restaurants, in addition to a range of other ethnic businesses, operated in Houston.¹²⁴ Indians and Pakistanis have established an entrepreneurial enclave in the Hillcroft area of southwest Houston, known as the Mahatma Gandhi Business District. Because the area is home to many non-Asian, ethnic, small businesses, Hillcroft-area business owners refused to reach a consensus to officially change the street name to Gandhi Avenue, as Indian business owners had desired.¹²⁵

¹²² K.L. Sindwani, interview by author, 25 November 2008 (interview notes in author’s possession).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *Indo-American News*, 30 December 1985.

¹²⁵ Jenalia Moreno, “Houston community celebrates district named for Gandhi,” *Houston Chronicle*, January 16, 2010. Accessed on 11 February 2013, <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Houston-community-celebrates-district-named-for-1613050.php>.

Faced with this resistance, Indian business owners raised the funds to purchase signs marking a commercial, not municipal designation. In addition to other ethnic businesses, several Indian- and Pakistani-owned or operated restaurants, grocery stores, clothing boutiques, beauty salons, insurance agencies, immigration law offices, and travel agencies run along both sides of the busy street. These shops and offices serve an increasingly ethnically diverse clientele. Ethnic newspapers are distributed in the shops of this ethnic entrepreneurial enclave, as well as in other smaller enclaves throughout Houston.¹²⁶

As ethnic diversity in the United States increases, so too does the proliferation of ethnic community newspapers—this, at a time when the general consumption of print newspapers is decreasing. Simultaneously, ethnic newspapers enjoy wide readership.¹²⁷ A study of Korean Americans indicates that an overwhelming 85 percent read a community newspaper. Another study on readership in Southern California, finds that “all new immigrants were highly connected to ethnic media [television, radio, and newspapers] as opposed to mainstream language media.”¹²⁸ As the founder of one ethnic

“Now Houston Has a Mahatma Gandhi District,” *The Hindu*, January 26, 2010. Accessed on 11 February 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article94986.ece?homepage=true>.

Katharine Shilcutt, “Little India,” *Houston Press*, May 25, 2011. Accessed on 11 February 2013, <http://www.houstonpress.com/2011-05-26/restaurants/little-india/5/>.

¹²⁶ Similar though much smaller enclaves also exist along HW6 from Sugar Land to Alief and in North Houston.

¹²⁷ In gathering newspapers for this project, I spent half a day in Houston’s Asiatowns—comprised of several sprawling shopping centers spread mostly across southwest Houston. Surveying my newspaper choices outside various Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian, and Pakistani grocery stores, I found it remarkable that almost everyone who exited a store picked up a newspaper or two. Or three. The newspapers analyzed in this section date from 2009.

¹²⁸ Wan-Ying Lin, Hayeon Song, and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, “Localizing the Global: Exploring the Transnational Ties That Bind in New Immigrant Communities,” *Journal of Communication*, 60, no. 2 (June 2010), 217.

newspaper states, broad-based newspapers “can’t cover a lot of stuff that these people need.”¹²⁹ Indeed, community papers are often perceived as representing the interests of “the community”—a decidedly nebulous term, at best. Ethnic newspaper publishers often perceive of themselves as social entrepreneurs—those who run a business for the sake of or under the guise of social justice. The founder of an Asian Indian community newspaper in the Southeastern U.S. stated, “we’re looking...to kind of give back to the community through this venue.”¹³⁰

Consequently, scholarship has focused on the content and meaning of articles in ethnic newspapers, writing about the transnational aspect of community newspapers or the potential for newspapers’ local community news for “building social cohesion” within communities.¹³¹ Still others have focused on the potential for advertising revenue to dictate news content. Instead of article content, I examine a major component of most ethnic newspapers: advertisements. Using Asian Indian newspapers in Houston, Texas, I examine the role of consumerism in community formation. I suggest that even as community newspapers are cultural materials produced by community members, they simultaneously produce culture. By this, I mean that not only do papers heavily saturated

¹²⁹ “In New York, California and Big Cities, Ethnic Press Mirrors Growing Diversity,” *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition), 29 May 29 2001, B.13.E. I use the term “broad-based” because of the theoretical implications of the term “mainstream.” See Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

¹³⁰ Greg A. Lohr, “Indian Website Puts Efforts Behind Ethnic Newspaper,” *Washington Business Journal*, 19, no. 53 (May 4, 2001), 6.

¹³¹ See, for example: Lin, Song, and Ball-Rokeach; Clint C. Wilson, Gutierrez, and Chao, *Racism, Sexism, and the Media: the Rise of Class Communication in Multicultural America* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2003); and C.E. Beaudoin, “News Effects on Bonding and Bridging Social Capital: An Empirical Study Relevant to Ethnicity in the United States,” *Communication Research* 39, no. 2 (2011).

with advertisements reinforce a culture of consumption, they also reinforce a sense of community by supporting the ethnic small business network.¹³²

Others have noted that newspapers are “a powerful medium that reflect immigrants’ views and represent their community.”¹³³ Ethnic presses link immigrants to their home countries, initiate change, maintain existing conditions, and also circumvent boundaries to create imagined communities. And they do this through a combination of the selective process of journalism and the profit-driven imperatives of advertising.¹³⁴ While “the press often presumes to speak for a nation or a people,” it also gives voice to the public as it legitimates ideas expressed and ideologies espoused within its pages. Even as those messages constantly shift, images of a united past and origin denote a particular and timeless imagined representation.

Analyzing the larger two Asian Indian newspaper enterprises, I found that between 65 and 73 percent of the features in the paper were advertisements or business-related news, though mostly advertisements. These ads were for small ethnic businesses, as well as large ethnic and broad-based businesses. The business-related articles relayed news of recent business mergers and financial developments, mainly in India while 26 to 35 percent were articles related to non-commercial issues. As in other papers, several pages in each paper were full-page ads. *Voice of Asia* had two sections comprised of several subsections, titled: Community, South Asia, Asia, Entertainment, Travel, Features, Science & Technology, Business & Economy, and Health. These newspapers

¹³² *Voice of Asia* boasts a readership of 45,000 people out of a total South Asian population of 75,000 in Houston.

¹³³ Lin, Song, and Ball-Rokeach, 6.

¹³⁴ Julie Codell, ed., *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British Colonial Press*, (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 2003) 16-17.

did cover local events including, for example, the Aligarh Alumni Association dinner, the annual Zarathustra Conference held in Houston, the India Culture Center general body meeting, recent *Holi* celebrations etc. It was not *all* business as usual.

Aside from a strongly transnational thrust, a perusal of the article titles betrays, again, a noticeable business focus. A front page article of one major section was on “Indian Tech Firms.” Of the three articles in the “Science and Technology” subsection, one was about the potential of and investment opportunities for new smartphones; another was on the spread of technological innovations in rural India, underscoring the now-familiar neoliberal trope of industrial and technological modernization as a transformative means to carry all of India, especially the poor, forward. The other paper, *Indo-American News*, consisted of two main sections, with the second section titled rather straightforwardly, “Business,” complete with an advice column from multimillionaire Richard Branson.

The newspapers could be interpreted as little more than colorful, extended advertisements that offer less a reflection of community interests than business-capitalist imperatives. Even the mode of distribution relied upon local businesses as distribution streams. Today, newspaper editors bemoan the demands of advertising on content decisions. Magazines are vilified for an over-reliance on ads, which promotes consumerism.¹³⁵ Historically, as early as the nineteenth century, critics decried “the prostitution of the press” in which the “advertiser was the best customer.”¹³⁶ However, instead of creating artificial boundaries around business interests and community interests

¹³⁵ Thomas C. Leonard, *News for All: America's Coming-of-Age with the Press* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 190.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

or constructing opposing binaries, it is important to recognize that the same business owners who advertise in these papers are also a part of the communities whose dollars they seek. They fill community needs that non-Indians are less trained to fill, such as catering Indian food for parties or providing religious services. Indian-owned travel agencies facilitate visits back to India. Dance schools teach youngsters various forms of Indian dance. Indian jewelry stores offer Indian-styled and made 22KT gold jewelry, unavailable through non-Indian venues. Ads in Indian newspapers for Indian radio shows reinforce the consumption of ethnic media within in a fixed market segment.

Several other services advertised in the papers can easily be obtained in non-Indian American marketplaces. Banking, insurance, real estate, and tax preparation, for example, are all services that are available outside of ethnic entrepreneurial enclaves. And yet, some immigrant Indians prefer that these types of service jobs be completed by co-ethnics due to language familiarity and/or perceived cultural familiarity so much so that many Indian businesses rely on co-ethnic patronage in order to remain profitable.

Conversely, several non-Indian businesses utilize Indian newspapers in order to directly tap into a potentially lucrative market. HEB, a large, ubiquitous, grocery store chain, advertises products that they believe appeal to Indian consumers, such as fresh garlic and daikon, but also Indian imported products such as mango pulp and tea bags. In another example, Jean Lin, the manager of *Southern Chinese Daily News*, offers to meet “all your printing needs.” Gillman Honda advertises their latest models with a demographic that favors Japanese vehicles. As a final example, a small television satellite company occupies an ambiguous space as an Indian business but one that utilizes an established and widespread satellite service, Dish Network.

As newspaper readers learn of recent and upcoming community events, they directly and indirectly consume information about the city's ethnic businesses. As newspapers rely on ad revenue to remain profitable, the presence of ads carries readers from solely forging social connections with an Indian community to becoming potential customers within that community; both are integral to the construction of an Indian identity. Since many ethnic businesses rely heavily on co-ethnic patronage, this advertising venue, along with ads on ethnic radio, is vital to the health of ethnic economies. For many service providers, ethnic newspapers provide the main platform for advertising. Also, since many immigrants prefer soliciting the services of co-ethnics and *Voice of Asia* and *Indo-American News* offer up-to-date information on co-ethnics in businesses, all three interests (newspaper publishers, advertisers, and readers) stand to benefit. Indeed, one large chain of newspapers is of the firm conviction that one in twenty readers subscribes to newspapers precisely *for* the ads.¹³⁷

While ethnic newspapers are primarily profit-driven enterprises, they play a significant role within ethnic communities. As in mainstream newspapers, financial motives dictate, to an extent, which stories receive coverage as well as which perspectives to promote. It should also be noted that ethnic economies are embedded in local, metropolitan, national, and global economies. They rely on other businesses for supplies and infrastructure, and they provide jobs; therefore, the material participation of immigrants in ethnic economies is vital to general economic well-being. Participation in ethnic economies reinforces consumer behavior, which also is integral in a capitalist market. I do not mean to imply that business is the only segment represented in these

¹³⁷ Ibid., 190.

papers. Political issues, entertainment, arts, and local events all have a presence, but one can not overlook the overwhelming preponderance of ad space and business/economic news. Ultimately, community newspapers are business ventures that depend on ad-revenue for profit. But there are not two separate spheres: one in the business of building advertising markets, the other in the business of relaying information about the community.¹³⁸ Rather, the two work in tandem and constantly evolve to construct and reconstruct the meaning of community, in particular, an ethnic consumerist community.

Immigrants have long comprised the better part of all population growth in the United States, and since at least the late nineteenth century, they came from nations undergoing the pains of industrialization. Displaced in their local economies or seeking the means to redress increasing debt, millions of immigrants poured into the United States from southern and eastern Europe, Guangzhou Province in China, the Punjab area of India, and the Central Ottoman Empire, to name but a few sending regions. The vast majority of these immigrants were small farm owners or tenants, though many also came from larger urbanized areas. By the time Indian and Pakistani immigrants migrated to the U.S. in the latter half of the twentieth century, the American economy had matured to the point of transition to a service and knowledge-based system. This particular immigrant group was not only practiced in the ways of capital accumulation, but because post-1965 immigration legislation permitted entry of only the highly skilled from South Asia, they had especially strong foundations; for at least two generations previous to their emigration from the Indian Subcontinent, their natal families had already successfully

¹³⁸ Ibid., 194.

navigated the modernizing economies established by the British Empire. In higher proportions than other immigrant groups, South Asian immigrants carried with them the lessons and accomplishments of preceding generations. They had accrued the cultural, social, and symbolic capital so advantageous in the new economy of the United States in the 1970s.

Houston's flourishing economy in that decade especially provided educated South Asians with ample opportunity for employment in the primary labor market from oil companies to engineering and construction companies to technology firms.¹³⁹ Moving from relatively un-prosperous nations, upon arrival many Indian and Pakistani immigrants and students indeed lacked economic capital comparable to that of the American middle class. They were quick to point this out. Still, they possessed the tools necessary to obtain financial success fairly quickly, as they also note and as indicated by the example of U.M. U.M. had obtained his bachelor's degree in chemical engineering at IIT Kanpur. In 1970, he joined the University of Houston's engineering program at the master's level. After initially residing in the campus dormitories, he moved into a nearby apartment:

Our apartment was a single-story, run-down house that three of us shared. You know we had three bedrooms so it was not a problem but it's—it was similar to what back home we had [as] a servant's quarters.... there was no air conditioning, no central heat. We just had one big heater, gas heater that in the

¹³⁹ Though the "tech sector" had not yet emerged in its contemporary form, Houston nevertheless was home to Texas Instruments (TI), a large company providing employment for many South Asians, according to oral history interviews. I have not yet examined records at TI. The primary labor market refers to jobs which offer high rates of upward mobility; these are largely "white-collar" jobs.

living room that used to give us the heat for everywhere. And in order to control the humidity we used to put a big pot of water on the top so that you still get some, otherwise it was too dry. *So it was always fun!*”¹⁴⁰

U.M.’s concluding remark indicates that although immigrants narrate their experience as one that originated in hardship and struggle, they simultaneously understood the temporality of their “struggling time,” in the words of one immigrant.¹⁴¹ Even if their living accommodations lacked proper utilities or were in severe need of repair, “it was always fun!” These student-immigrants clearly anticipated that their temporary struggle would eventually lead to secure employment, perhaps in their sending regions but just as likely in the United States.

This is not to suggest a complete elision between conceptions or the performativity of “middle class-ness” in South Asia and the United States. Social and economic structures in specific locales, whether urban spaces in southern Asia or the southern U.S., produced distinct middle-class subjectivities. I contend that despite nuances both significant and subordinate, South Asian immigrants mobilized around a common, fundamental familiarity with the “modern” economic behaviors of capitalist societies. Since class consciousness is a consequence of capitalist modes of production, this logic traversed national boundaries and was employed by middle-class subjects in the countries of South Asia and the U.S. and indeed, all of the market-embedded world. In addition, since any “class”—capitalist, middle, or working—exists only relative to other

¹⁴⁰ A.S.A., interview, 6-7.

¹⁴¹ Z.A., interview.

classes, and specifically through struggle *with* other classes, members of all classes everywhere constantly strategize to maintain and/or enhance their access to resources.¹⁴²

Indian and Pakistani immigrants were uniquely positioned to find success as a result of what could be termed, a “perfect storm” of historical circumstances, contemporary economies, and their own strategizing.

¹⁴² Dale L. Johnson, *Middle Classes in Dependent Countries*, 48.

Chapter 2

Weaving Together the Strands of a New Life

Ambitious students, eager wives, and hopeful families parting from familiar streets and loved ones—immigrants from India and Pakistan in the second half of the twentieth century sought new opportunities that would eventually facilitate success back home or help situate them as the latest wave of new Americans. Many pursued advanced degrees at moderately priced universities, while all hoped to find both urban economic systems to support their ambitions and city residents who would welcome them. They found these needs reasonably well met in a few large cities across the United States but especially in Houston, Texas. The 1970s could well be dubbed “Houston’s decade,” what with its booming, oil-dependent economy, high rate of migration, and construction frenzy. The population of the city of Houston increased by 31.5 percent between 1960

and 1970.¹ In 1980, the population expanded by an additional 360,000.² Immigrants from around the nation and the world streamed into the city to provide labor. As newly degreed engineers, scientists, and, increasingly, business majors, Indian and Pakistani immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s found in this expanding city immediate employment and a burgeoning ethnic community. The “pioneers”—students who preceded them by almost a decade—had already established the foundations of ethnic community: organizations, public events, and a handful of small businesses. Throughout the 1960s, these students had entered a city lacking any South Asian infrastructure of community or religious centers, social activities, or social service organizations. They came at a time when ethnic entrepreneurs had not yet established shops or restaurants. By the mid-1970s thousands of co-ethnics continued to arrive in Houston, and it is not an exaggeration to say that, they along with their wives and international students from India and Pakistan who were still in school as well as those who had already graduated and settled in the city, formed the backbone of community institution-building. Newcomers expanded these efforts to accommodate the swelling numbers and needs of a steady stream of newly arrived Indian and Pakistani Houstonians. Many immigrants envisioned re-settling in India and Pakistan at some point. Though there is no way of tracking this data, anecdotal evidence suggests that, in fact, many did return overseas. Some remained in their home countries, while still others returned to the U.S. In any case, a sizable portion of Houston’s South Asian immigrant population remained in Houston. In this chapter, I sketch out the texture of Indian and Pakistani immigrant lives in the 1960s and 1970s. Though subsequent

¹ “Historical Population Growth: 1850-2010, City of Houston,” compiled by City of Houston Planning and Development Dept., Public Policy Division from U.S. Census Bureau, 1850 to 2010.

² Ibid.

chapters will expand upon the theme of race and capital, and are thus argument-driven, this chapter is intentionally descriptive in order to understand the nuances of immigrants' lived experiences.

After learning of the University of Houston (UH) through American university catalogs, the earliest group of Indian and Pakistani students often chose UH because of low tuition as compared to other public universities. As word spread, the South Asian student migration to Houston's institutes of higher education witnessed a steady increase—one that has yet to ebb. By 1971 approximately 156 students from India and Pakistan lived and studied in Houston, at both the University of Houston and Rice University.³ In addition, approximately three hundred other Indian and Pakistani immigrants lived in the city of Houston.⁴ In May 1971 P.B. joined her husband, already employed as an engineer at Shell Oil Company in Houston. They had married in India just two months prior, and she looked forward to beginning a new life with him. She found that students at the University of Houston had established the Indian Students Association (ISA). Along with other women—some as wives of UH students and other wives like herself, with no UH affiliation—she became active in ISA activities. She found that through ISA, Indians both on and off campus came together to construct what it meant to be Indian in America. Likewise, M.U.K. completed his M.A. at UH in 1966, re-settled in Karachi, and married in 1968. By 1969 M.U.K. aspired to complete his doctorate and upon earning admission to UH, returned to Houston. He applied for a visa for his wife and son, and in 1970 they joined him. M.U.K. played an active role in

³ See Table 1 in Chapter Two, End Matter

⁴ I have based this number on multiple, self-reported estimates offered by Indian and Pakistani immigrants who arrived between 1963 and 1980.

founding ethnic and religious institutions; he arranged the first congregational *Eid* prayer in Houston in the mid-1960s and organized Urdu poetry readings. These “pioneers” have remained in Houston and by the late-2000s had been instrumental in expanding the public presence and services available to Indians and Pakistanis in Houston. P.B. has served on several boards of directors in Houston’s arts scene and most recently spearheaded the effort to build a “South Asia” wing at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. M.U.K. and his wife A.H.K. serve as unofficial family counselors for Muslims of all backgrounds in Houston. M.U.K. also played an integral role in establishing the first mosque and ultimately a cohesive mosque system in the greater Houston area.

Immigrants from India and Pakistan generally left their parents and siblings behind, instead forming with co-ethnics in the U.S. what I term “surrogate families.” The bonds formed among community members transcended the usual exchanges of friendship. I.S., whose husband, Mohammad, studied engineering at UH, recalled that her husband’s co-ethnic classmates felt close enough to the couple that “they would come and... they would just open the fridge door and find whatever is there.”⁵ They referred to I.S. as *Bhabhi*, an Urdu term of respect meaning “my brother’s wife.” On an almost daily basis, I.S. and M.A.S. visited other Indian and Pakistani families in the neighborhood. She recalled, “I knew one or two families very well, so we used to see each other maybe every other day if not every day for just half an hour, one hour. [We] had dinner at home, [and then] you know, ‘let’s go visit across the street.’ And it was easier to just go over there and have tea and then come back.”⁶ U.R. and A.H.K. both recall weekly dinners,

⁵ I.S., interview by author, 28 July 2007 [MDA], 27-28.

⁶ I.S., interview, 33.

birthday parties, and road trips, all spent with the same group of friends—friends who embraced the role that extended family would otherwise have fulfilled. Many of these immigrants still meet as groups on a monthly basis and celebrate friendships that have lasted for over forty years.⁷

During the 1960s and '70s, the relatively few Indians and Pakistanis who resided in Houston formed a single community in many ways. Yet in other ways, they remained separate and distinct. They roomed together in apartments near the University of Houston and as families, frequently socialized together. P.A., a graduate business student at UH, spoke of:

the very next apartment [where there] was a bunch of Indians with a Pakistani roommate who is still a delightful friend of mine. He went back to Karachi...Indians and Pakistanis really didn't care where you were from... So you could say we were South Asians. We really didn't look at ourselves.... *Desis*—it's the word that was coined literally to describe the fact that we really don't care about these political barriers between countries."⁸

An undergraduate at UH-Downtown, G.B. informally socialized with both Indian and fellow Pakistani students on the weekends.⁹ In addition, almost every month, he and his friends attended the regularly scheduled Hindi-language movie screening organized by

⁷ Z.A., interview by author, 28 January 2007 (MDA); S.M., interview by author, 21 September 2011 (MDA); M.U.K., interview by author, 21 January 2007 (MDA).

⁸ P.A., interview by author, 20 June 2011 (MDA), 7.

⁹ G.B., interview by author, 19 July 2007 (MDA), 24.

the Indian Students Association at UH-Main Campus.¹⁰ Other Pakistanis also attended these movie events. I.S. and M.A.S. enjoyed joining other South Asians for the Hindi film screenings.¹¹ They also met regularly with “a couple of Indian friends; they were living close to our house so we used to go and visit them. Because they were so little in number, you know, Indians and Pakistanis, we got along very well.”¹² Pakistani immigrant A.H.K. explained that their common ground was “place. That is, India and Pakistan have the same kind of cultural things and for that, we had all that togetherness without thinking about which religion you follow or what is your practice.” A.H.K. felt that together, they were “a very congenial group because people who come from India-Pakistan, their culture and practices are so similar and the dress is also kind of much similar. So, we never felt kind of strange to each other.” By “culture and practices” she meant, among other common features, clothing, food, and language.¹³ Sociologist Ann Swidler emphasizes that older definitions of “culture” (e.g. “the entire way of life of a people”) have given way to definitions that present culture as a system of meanings.¹⁴ Swidler defines “culture” as a system that “consists of such symbolic vehicles of meaning including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life.”¹⁵ Both Geertz and

¹⁰ G.B., interview, 17-18.

¹¹ I.S., interview, 32.

¹² I.S., interview, 29.

¹³ A.H.K., interview by author, 17 July 2007 (MDA), 37-38.

¹⁴ This shift in orientation was initially proposed by Clifford Geertz in his landmark work *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

¹⁵ Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review*, 51, No. 2. (April 1986), pp. 273-286, 273.

Swidler stress that culture is constituted less by physical manifestations —the clothing or food, as mentioned above—but by the significance that ethnic group members assign to these tools.

P.B., an Indian immigrant, suggested that the interactions between South Asian groups were “seamless” but also not “extensive.”¹⁶ It is reasonable to surmise that since Pakistanis were relatively few in number, they more keenly embraced socialization with Indians, while the much larger, more developed Indian community had less imperative to attend Pakistani-sponsored events. For example, although I.S. and her husband frequently socialized with one or two Indian families in their neighborhood, they only infrequently attended larger-Indian community events. I.S. explained that “there was a larger community in Houston— Indian community—than compared to the Pakistani community. This, I found out sometimes when we went to the University of Houston and we saw the students over there, if they had some function over there. So definitely that was the largest community at that time.”¹⁷ Almost every Indian and Pakistani interviewee with whom I interacted recalled attending these movie screenings. These films served as a bridge between the two national groupings in that they revealed the porousness of national boundaries. Still, further investigation reveals that Indians and Pakistanis also worked hard to maintain the boundaries between their groups, especially evident in the celebration of national days and religious observances. Though the boundaries between Indians and Pakistanis were highly fluid and immigrants recognized a shared history, they understood the “damaged” relations between the emerging nations since Partition.

¹⁶ P.B., interview by author, 11 July 2007 (MDA), 30.

¹⁷ I.S., interview, 29.

They made sense of that tension by separating the *politics* of nationalism from the *people* of these nations.

Despite acknowledging a shared history, immigrants located several disjunctures, especially at the organizational level. A.H.K. described “students at the University of Houston [who] used to arrange some programs and gatherings and they had India and Pakistan—two different nations— but their activities are kind of similar.”¹⁸ She suggests that their activities were “similar” though not the same, and the respective student groups, the Indian Students Association (ISA) and the Pakistani Students Association (PSA), represented and perpetuated those dissimilarities. Indian immigrant A.K. struggled to clearly articulate the relationship between Indian and Pakistani immigrants. He said, “it is very, very nice actually. There is really not a whole lot of of . . . I mean, there are definitely differences but when it comes to shows and this and that and everybody is . . . I don't know, I think it is some cultural thing or something like that.”¹⁹ A.K. begins by wanting to highlight the solidarity felt by all South Asians, and though he wants to say that there is not much difference, he cannot. He stops himself and notes that actually, he perceives definite “differences.” He then attempts to neutralize the degree of difference by highlighting the solidarity, underscoring the attendance of ethnic shows. Finally, he admits that he really does not know how to make sense of the differences or relationships between groups and attributes it to “some cultural thing.”²⁰

¹⁸ A.H.K., interview, 29.

¹⁹ A.K., interview by author, 2 August 2007 (MDA), 25.

²⁰ This is a good example of how the transitions—the searching for the right words— between thoughts are as revealing as the main ideas expressed in an oral history passage.

Not everyone was as ambiguous as A.K. about Indian and Pakistani relationships and found significance in a shared past. I.S., born in 1942, grew up in Nowgong, a small village near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh, India. She recalled her childhood as “very peaceful.” In Nowgong, “there were a couple of Muslim homes but not very many.” Most of the villagers were Hindu. “Muslims were not in majority. Mostly our own family, they had a couple of houses. Distant family members were close by. My uncle, my mother's brother, was there. My grandmother was there. And then, a few houses that I remember that Muslims were there. Mostly were Hindus.” I.S. had heard some of this information from her grandmother who also informed her that their ancestors had lived in Nowgong during the Sepoy Uprising in 1857.²¹ After Partition, I.S. returned to Nowgong with her mother to visit family members who remained in India. When she turned twenty-two she married and after three years moved to Houston with her husband, M.A.S., and young daughter. As a family, they befriended other Indian families and attended a few Indian events, such as the movie screenings. But their attendance of events ended at celebration of Indian Independence Day or observance of major Hindu occasions such as *Diwali*. By migrating away from their respective homelands, Indians and Pakistanis in Houston constructed new meanings of religion in their lives. Though they may have interacted in other spheres, religion created an exclusive space in which to express one specific aspect of Indian and Pakistani identities. While many of these early immigrants continued to build relationships across national lines, as more Indian and Pakistani Muslims increased their presence in Houston, many increasingly preferred socializing with co-religionist

²¹ I.S., interview, 2-4.

South Asians—Hindu with Hindu, Christian with Christian, and Muslim with Muslim, for example.

It is important, however, not to over-determine the significance of religion in the establishment of friendships among South Asians. C.B., a Hindu immigrant from Pakistan, “was born there and the majority of my friends are Muslim. I cannot say anything bad about Muslims because they have supported us. In Pakistan and here. My best friends in Pakistan were all Muslims.”²² C.B. considered herself firmly embedded in Houston’s small Pakistani and almost exclusively Muslim community of the 1970s, recalling that “when anybody came from Pakistan, we would have a party because very few people were here. So if anybody came from Pakistan, [we said] ‘Oh, we have to go meet them.’ Anybody. Because we were the little group here.”²³ C.B. and her husband have maintained active friendships with Indians and Pakistanis but have had no institutional affiliations with either Indian or Pakistani organizations. C.B. explained that she was just not “into” them.²⁴ She emphasized that religion did not play a prominent role in her life since for her, religion was “within you. It doesn’t make a difference if you are a Hindu or Muslim or Christian. It makes no difference.”²⁵ If anything, based on frequency and depth of social interaction, the ethnic bonds between Indians and Pakistanis of any religion in 1970s Houston seemed as strong as, if not stronger than, the bonds of sociality formed between Muslim Pakistanis and Muslims of other nationalities. When asked about other Muslims in the Houston area with whom she was acquainted,

²² C.B., interview by author, 26 June 2007 (MDA), 20.

²³ C.B., interview, 18.

²⁴ Ibid., 19.

²⁵ Ibid., 21.

I.S. responded that “we knew some people but we were not very close, you know. Oh, we met them in the mosque. So they were from Syria, they were from Iran, they were from Turkey, Jordan and mostly Middle Eastern countries.” “Of course,” she added, they were also from India and Pakistan.”²⁶

Indian and Pakistani immigrants maintained relationships with their homelands at multiple levels. They regularly, if infrequently, communicated with family members, as A.H.K. reflected: “it was not a very advanced system of communication [because] we did not have any email or computer. Naturally so, we used to write letters and we used to wait each day, minutes and hours—like, you used to count, if I wrote a letter...then I will count how many days have gone or passed by.”²⁷ “We didn't have this email that you send something to somebody and you can get the answer back within one hour or within a few minutes,” I.S. explained.²⁸ Women tended to write more frequently than did men. Because long-distance phone calls were far more expensive, contact was maintained more often through letters. N.F. spoke of calling her parents: “At that time, it wasn't easy to get them because we had to call the operator and the operator would tell us, ‘We will call you and connect the line in 2 hours,’ so we had to sit near the phone [waiting for] the operator [to] call. It used to be such a hassle.” She found it more convenient to write letters to her parents instead, especially since her “father always preferred me writing letters because he could read it over and over again. So, he would not really want to talk to me over the phone. He would just collect my letters.”²⁹ S.A.K., from Baroda, India,

²⁶ I.S., interview, 41.

²⁷ A.H.K., interview, 4-5.

²⁸ I.S., interview, 45.

²⁹ N.F., interview by author, 22 January 2007 (MDA), 15.

reflected that, “you are in a different country. You are away from home. My parents didn't have a phone when I left India. Then, the phone came later on. And then, calling was very expensive. You wrote letters. Things are very different now. It is hard for somebody to imagine, it took 10 days, 12 days, to get a letter.”³⁰

Usually immigrants mailed letters via the postal service, but certainly, if a community member or co-ethnic planned on travelling to or from major cities in South Asia, Houston's immigrants sent and received letters and goods through visitors. They also received “paper clippings and some magazines of our language” from their families in India and Pakistan. “Once in a month or something, there would be a little parcel that would come, book post as you would call it. It would take about 6 weeks to get here,” recalled A.K..³¹ A.H.K. added that “if somebody comes, then [our families in Pakistan] send along with them some pictures, some things for us. . . presents or items. We get from them [our families in Pakistan] or saying somebody [from Houston] is going back, so we send something to them. So, that is the way we were in touch.”³²

Not only did women assume the responsibility of correspondence overseas, many women shared that they faced a difficult period of adjustment after migrating to the U.S. The two phenomena were likely related. N.F. related that Houston “was a very beautiful place but I was very homesick because I came from a large family. It was just me and my husband in a small, one-bedroom apartment which just [was the size of] my bathroom back home so I was kind of very upset about it and I didn't know how to react. But, in

³⁰ S.A.K., interview by author, 31 July 2007 (MDA) 15.

³¹ A.K., interview, 14.

³² A.H.K., interview, 44.

due time, I realized this was the way life was over here.”³³ Others echoed the same sentiment. When asked what particular hardships she faced after moving to Houston, I.S. immediately said, “first of all, I missed the family. Loneliness was there. Being all by yourself. Waiting for the letters to arrive.”³⁴ Reading letters from home and knowing that visits would be infrequent, at best, “used to make me very emotional and I used to cry,” remembered A.H.K.³⁵ C.B. spoke of getting “very bored sitting in the home (laughs) - very bored! I mean I got so bored I hit the wall of the apartment. And I had no clue that walls are so hollow here.”³⁶ Underscoring the same deep sense of loneliness as C.B., I.S. also longed for many years to return to Pakistan. She reflected that:

“my mind changed really . . . I was after my husband for a long time to go, not only the first 5 years but after that, too. But when my kids came in higher grade, like 8th grade, 9th grade, then I thought I don't know whether they can adjust to the schools over there or not. And then, by that time, there were a lot of people coming from Pakistan and the community grew. So, then you were not that lonely. And then, you have already settled here for 10 years now. I gave up after that.”³⁷

³³ N.F., interview, 2.

³⁴ I.S., interview, 36.

³⁵ A.H.K., interview, 4-5.

³⁶ C.B., interview, 5.

³⁷ I.S., interview, 25-26.

For many immigrant wives, the loneliness was compounded by visa restrictions that did not permit them to work, at least not until they received green cards. I.S. explained, “Well, I was with an F2 visa and we didn't have permission to work. My husband was a student and I was a dependent.”³⁸ Unlike their husbands, who were either students or full-time employees, most South Asian women did not enter a professional or academic network immediately upon arrival. Though many South Asian immigrant women eventually worked outside the home, initially, most did not. They created social networks with co-ethnics both within and outside of their neighborhoods, with neighbors to a very limited extent, and with ladies’ groups hosted by area churches.³⁹

Many, if not most of these middle-class, South Asian women had college degrees ranging in concentrations from home economics to business and biology. Several obtained full-time employment and some began their own businesses. Others worked part-time. Conversely, N.F., who described her family as “well-to-do” with “our maids, we had our servants, we had a gatekeeper,” insisted that “back home, we [girls/women] are not raised to have dreams...we are never told, ‘Oh, when you grow up, you have to become a doctor or a lawyer or a business woman.’ You don’t.”⁴⁰ She continued, “yes, for boys, the parents tell them become a doctor, become a lawyer, become an engineer. Those are the things that the boys are taught. But in those days, no, there was no such thing. I did not have a dream like that. I knew I was... going to be married and I am going to have kids and I am going to be a housewife. Basically, that is how I was raised.

³⁸ Ibid., 39.

³⁹ Church groups will be discussed further in this chapter.

⁴⁰ N.F., interview.

And I had no problem with it.” N.F.’s upbringing, however, was the exception among South Asian women immigrants to the U.S. in the 1970s. C.B. recalled that her Pakistani family encouraged her to pursue medicine, even after marriage. Instead, she opened her own beauty salon in Houston. In Pakistan, A.H.K.’s father encouraged all of his daughters to obtain advanced degrees. One of A.H.K.’s sisters became a doctor, another a town planner, and the youngest a teacher. She herself became a medical technologist. U.R., from Maharashtra state in India, also trained to be a medical technologist. Accounting was V.B.’s calling. The list continues, but it suffices to reiterate that during this period of nation-building in both India and Pakistan, middle-class parents encouraged their daughters to obtain higher degrees. Many held professional posts prior to marriage, and though some stopped working to raise families after marriage, many more continued in some capacity.

Some early immigrants from Pakistan, in particular, sent regular remittances back to their families in Pakistan and India. G.B. sent money to his family “from the first day” of his arrival.⁴¹ Though this is probably an exaggeration, it is safe to assume that from early after their arrival, immigrants supported their families in small but significant ways. G.B. remitted roughly \$200 per month during the 1970s.⁴² A.H.K. explained that since “the currency rate is different—one dollar is worth more in Pakistan—so [she and her husband sent] whatever he was supposed to send them, according to them. It was not much really, though. It was \$100 or less than \$200. He could support them and they

⁴¹ G.B., interview, 37.

⁴² Ibid., 37-8.

could live a comfortable life.”⁴³ Her husband, M.U.K., continues to send money to financially struggling relatives in both India and Pakistan. Likewise, though I.S.’s mother once held the responsibility of distributing money to less fortunate family members, I.S. has more recently assumed that role. She observed that “I used to get news from my mother and sometimes I do write to [other relatives] if they need help. There are a couple of family members that sometimes are in need so we try to help them [by sending] money for business, for weddings and things like that, or if somebody is sick... Almost two or three times a year I send whatever [amount] to India.”⁴⁴

Contrary to popular notions of immigrants as poor and uneducated or of Asian women as crippled under a system of “eastern” patriarchy, South Asian immigrants to the U.S. in the sixties and seventies as a whole were already embedded in global systems of class ascendancy, investment in education, and British and American media and cultural practices. These factors—already established prior to migration—aided immigrants in their quests for upward mobility after migration. Though some immigrants rose from very humble backgrounds, many others revealed a comfortable upbringing. Immigrants are generally those with a combination of economic, social, and cultural capital—those with access to some degree of wealth, familiarity with other migrants who have already established linkages and have knowledge of overseas opportunities, and fluency in the language of cultural knowledge. The majority of these migrations from South Asia to Houston were urban-to-urban migrations. Though a few future emigrants were born in small villages (e.g. Nowgong or Shikarpur), most had migrated to larger cities well

⁴³ A.H.K., interview, 30.

⁴⁴ I.S., interview, 7.

before migration, suggesting, on average, a high level of urbanization. In Bombay, for example, as articulated by P.A., “nobody cares where you are from” because everyone is from somewhere else.⁴⁵ A third-generation Bombayite, P.A. related that he “grew up listening to rock. I knew a lot of stuff about America—my musical interests, I read a lot.” He believed that as a result of his “cosmopolitan” upbringing, he “didn’t have any difficulty assimilating and getting along with my colleagues” after migrating to the U.S.⁴⁶ Likewise, S.K. & V.K. drew a parallel between urbanity and cosmopolitanisms that functioned as a global language.

South Asian immigrants have described their material status as “above average.” For example, A.H.K., whose father was a businessman in the printing industry, judged her own “lifestyle” in Karachi as “very comfortable, very luxury life, you can say” with “maids—people came to the house, washed your clothes and did the drying.” By contrast, life in the U.S. was, for some, a downgrade in lifestyle (though likely not in terms of actual wealth). A.H.K. continued, “we have to do a lot of manual labor work which we never did in our country. We never cleaned our bathrooms. We never mowed the lawns or anything like that. But here, that was the lifestyle. We adopted it but we missed our luxury and the comfortable and convenient lifestyle there.”⁴⁷ After downsizing from her parents’ large house in Karachi to a small apartment in Houston, N.F. called her father to complain. “Dad, when I take two steps, the bathroom is there. If I take three steps, the kitchen is there... I was so homesick.”⁴⁸ P.D. affirmed that he too, had a “fairly

⁴⁵ P.A., interview.

⁴⁶ P.A., interview, 8.

⁴⁷ A.H.K., interview, 5.

⁴⁸ N.F., interview, 16-17.

privileged” upbringing “with a lot of luxuries.” His family “used to always take long vacations and travel first class. My dad was pretty well to do so we were...I’d say we had a pretty decent lifestyle.”⁴⁹ Others, such as V.B., born in New Delhi to a self-described lower-middle income family, nevertheless had families with some means. V.B.’s father, an accountant trained at a university in Lahore, Pakistan, prior to Partition, found employment with the World Health Organization in Switzerland when V.B. was eight or nine years old. Despite the challenges of reestablishing themselves after migration from Pakistan to India— V.B. spent her early childhood in West Patel Nagar, New Delhi, a “special community that was for the refugees who had left Pakistan”—her family eventually moved to Greater Kailash. V.B. described it as a “status community” reflecting her family’s “journey” as “upwardly mobile.” She continued, “depending on how dad’s been doing, we’ve just been moving up.”⁵⁰

Due to increased globalization and a strong colonial past, many future emigrants in the Indian Subcontinent were well-versed with western modes of learning, literature, and cultural forms. Several interviewees had studied under British school systems, including S.A.K. from Gujarat, India, who remarked that she “studied in a convent, right from kindergarten to high school, [I] was at Mount Carmel Convent which was missionary schools run by the nuns.”⁵¹ In Karachi, N.F. felt that her adjustment to life in the U.S. was ameliorated because in her youth, she “went to a British school back home so I was very liberal minded. I was very open to meeting people and I have never had a

⁴⁹ P.D., interview by author, 26 August 2011 (MDA), 2.

⁵⁰ V.B., interview by author, 21 September 2011 (MDA), 7.

⁵¹ S.A.K., interview, 32.

problem with anybody [in the U.S.].”⁵² P.A., from Bombay, “went to an Italian Catholic school [where] English was the medium of education.”⁵³ Similarly, from kindergarten through high school, P.D. attended St. Joseph in Bombay, a Catholic convent school.⁵⁴

He described his school in some detail:

Most of the teachers were non-Catholic or Indians from different parts of India. I mean they were living in Bombay but they were South Indians, they were Maharashtrians, there were some Gujaratis and also we had some priests teaching us a few lectures... It was an honor to get admitted to that school. In those days, I mean, the good [school] was a Catholic school. The class [was] composed of...ninety [students] in each standard, in each grade level but there were two classes A and B. So forty-five students per class. Of the forty-five, there were maybe three or four Catholics. The rest were all Hindus and Muslims and Parsis and Sikhs and Jains, all mixed together.⁵⁵

Even those who went to “Urdu-medium” schools such as Fatima Jinnah Girls Secondary School in Karachi gained some familiarity with American and British cultural forms. I.S. described the school as having both a basketball and baseball court.⁵⁶ Obviously, the structure of higher education itself with its college and university system bore striking

⁵² N.F., interview.

⁵³ P.A., interview, 2.

⁵⁴ P.D., interview, 47-8. Bombay is in Maharashtra state.

⁵⁵ P.D., interview.

⁵⁶ I.S., interview, 12-13.

similarities to institutions of higher learning in the U.S. and UK. A.H.K., V.B., and most other immigrants matriculated through the system and often into professional postings. As A.H.K. stated, she “had my education [in Karachi] from college, from university. I did my master’s. Then, I got a job there as a research assistant and then, research officer in Defense Society of Pakistan.”⁵⁷ The pathway to middle-class success (i.e. from college degree to high-skilled employment) indicates that the transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy was already underway. Outside of school, print and visual media were a source of entry into the global circulation of ideas, as suggested by immigrant S.A.K.: the “media picks up the top stuff. And you read. There was no TV; TV had just come out in the late 1960s...but you read.”⁵⁸ She continued by adding that she “grew up reading *Reader’s Digest*. I mean, that is something we get. Even to this day, my family gets *Reader’s Digest*.”⁵⁹ Others read popular youth literature such as *The Hardy Boys* mysteries in their leisure time.⁶⁰

Of course, one can not overlook the vestiges and networks of colonial presence in the Subcontinent. S.A.K. recounted that her maternal grandfather “did business with the Britishers.”⁶¹ P.A. confirmed that his uncle had completed his Ph.D. at Edinburgh.⁶² Elaborating on linkages between metropole and colony, N.F. related,

⁵⁷ A.H.K., interview, 1.

⁵⁸ S.A.K., interview.

⁵⁹ S.A.K., interview, 32.

⁶⁰ P.A., interview.

⁶¹ S.A.K., interview, 33.

⁶² P.A., interview, 2-3.

My parents originally are from India. They are from Hyderabad Deccan. They come from the *nawab* family which is the royal families of India. My father, as a young kid - I think he was twelve, thirteen years old when he went to London. He went to Manchester University. He graduated from there. And yes, he did get an award from the Queen's father –I think it was King George...and he got an award for his good work. Then, he moved to Pakistan and that is where we all settled. Actually, he went back to India, got married, and settled in Pakistan. I had a very high respect for my father. He did the best. He was a very firm person and I think [this] was because the way he was raised was more British than an Indian, so I think that is where we get that open-mindedness, is because of my father because he was open, he was blunt.⁶³

N.F.'s lineage offered at least some of her ancestors the opportunity to form more complex connections with Britain. Arguably, her family members and other families that had been educated overseas or worked with Britishers had a greater propensity to seriously consider expatriate lives. N.F.'s brother had already settled in Houston when she arrived in the mid-1970s. While the vast majority of immigrants did not have ties to Indian royalty, several interviewees mentioned family members who had travelled to the UK, Germany, or the U.S. to pursue higher education.

Harkening back to immigrants' lived experiences prior to migration illustrates the complexities of what, for the sake of convenience, we term "Indian," "Pakistani," or "immigrant." Ultimately, these signifiers defy any simple definitions but do suggest a

⁶³ N.F., interview, 15-16.

broad range of possibilities. Though the evidence above represents only a fractured representation of South Asian lives, it nevertheless helps dispel ideas of postcolonial spaces as monolithic or homogenous. Rather, we can see that many future emigrants were well-accustomed to processes of urbanization and to reconciling degrees of difference in society, just as they would eventually do as American immigrants.

No matter how much familiarity with American cultural discourses and media forms postcolonial subjects profess, the lived reality of immigration was jarring in at least some respects. S.A.K. revealed that, despite attending convent schools, fluency in English, and knowledge of American literature, after migrating to the U.S., “you know, you are getting over a culture shock.”⁶⁴ Immigrants found ways of ameliorating their adjustment, including for example, participation in host family and church outreach programs. Though South Asian immigrants and students were without their birth families, at least a few students availed themselves of the Host Family program, organized by the Institute of International Education. For students such as M.U.K. and P.M., the Host Family program gave students “an opportunity to establish a lasting, on-going relationship with an American family.”⁶⁵ Students were matched according to similar interests, with host families who were “good, solid citizens.”⁶⁶ M.U.K., a Pakistani student who worked toward his M.A. in biology from 1963 to 1966, explained, “My host family, they were a middle-aged husband and wife, and two children. For every festivity, like Christmas or New Year's Day, they would invite me and I would spend the

⁶⁴ S.A.K., interview, 8.

⁶⁵ *A Report on the International Student at the University of Houston*, University of Houston (Houston, 1968), 73.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

festivity with them. At other times, they also took me to different places” such as area attractions. His relationship with his host family was so earnest that at their insistence, he called them “mom” and “dad.” He added, “I was virtually like a son to them.”⁶⁷ In 1966 M.U.K. moved back to Pakistan, returning in 1969 to pursue his doctorate as a married man. When he returned to the U.S. for his PhD, he had filed for and obtained an immigrant visa with the support of his host family. They signed visa forms stating that their wealth was his financial security and that he would not be a financial burden on the state.⁶⁸ M.U.K.’s wife, A.H.K., and infant son followed in 1970 after the processing of their visas. M.U.K. and his host family greeted the mother and child at the airport and “welcomed us very well.”⁶⁹ M.U.K. and A.H.K. kept in regular contact with their host family for nearly twenty years.⁷⁰

Through the University of Houston, P.M. also participated in the Host Family program which he described as “very nice.”⁷¹ He found that although most other white Americans refrained from engaging in meaningful relationships with him, he was able to “get to know” his host family. Many South Asian students found it difficult to connect with Americans outside of their academic departments. P.M. remembers that initially, “when I went to the campus I was a little bit disappointed in the sense that I think the international community of students over there had very strong ways, in the sense that

⁶⁷ M.U.K., interview, 2.

⁶⁸ Parts of the sections on host families and the church are found in the author’s M.A. thesis: Uzma Quraishi, “Educationally Empowered: The Indian And Pakistani Student Community In Houston, Texas, 1960-1975” (M.A. thesis, University of Houston, 2008).

⁶⁹ A.H.K., interview, 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ P.M., interview, 12.

they had good interactions...but there was very little interaction between international students and other American kids in those days.”⁷² P.M. found that if he “initiated conversations with them, [he] got good responses but they were courteous responses. [He] did not develop deep relationships with Americans until [he] went into the workforce” after which he was able to form those relationships “quite a bit.”⁷³ He said, “I just didn’t click with them.”⁷⁴ In trying to understand why this divide existed, he said that he “didn’t have a common language with them. You know, not English language but I’m saying, I didn’t know much about football. I didn’t...I mean... I didn’t have the same interests.”⁷⁵ By the time P.M. entered the workforce it is likely that he had developed the cultural “language” necessary to socialize with his American co-workers, though the passage of time alone cannot fully explain how he became more acculturated. Rather, although he did not socialize off-campus with American students, the campus setting nevertheless provided opportunities for interaction and acculturation. For example, in the cafeteria, he occasionally lunched with an American student. He also attended lunches on campus hosted by church outreach programs but facilitated by the International Student Services organization at UH. While P.M. felt disappointed in the lack of friendship potential with American students, he enjoyed the relationships fostered with his host family.⁷⁶ The program left him sufficiently inspired to eventually host an international student from China some years later. For I.S. and her husband, a student at UH, their

⁷² Ibid., 11.

⁷³ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 12.

interactions with their host family was also the most developed relationship they had with an American (non-immigrant) family. I.S. noted that their host “mother,” a “grandmother at the time [while] I was a young mother,” worked at the university bookstore and that “they would visit each others homes.”⁷⁷ Along with the co-ethnic friend network that functioned as a surrogate family, host families also assisted in the transition between home and host societies by approximating at least part of the family system that students had left behind.

The University of Houston encouraged international students “to learn about the people and customs of the United States,” and through *International News*, the international student newsletter, local churches invited students to a number of activities.⁷⁸ Church Women United, a group of women from various Houston churches, hosted a weekly, volunteer-led, International Coffee Hour at the UH campus. The luncheons provided free sandwiches and gave “international students an opportunity to get together on a regular basis.”⁷⁹ The South Main Baptist Church arranged a “mini-vacation” in the form of a Sunday afternoon of fun-filled activities at the church. Ads in *International News* stated clearly that there was “no obligation to attend religious services,” while transportation, childcare, food, and sport activities would be provided.⁸⁰ The UH Baptist Student Center also invited international students to afternoon parties though they were not required to attend services.⁸¹

⁷⁷ I.S., interview, 33-4.

⁷⁸ *A Report on the International Student at the University of Houston*, University of Houston, 45.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁸⁰ *International News*. International Student Services, University of Houston (Houston, 1968).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Away from campus, area churches also set up programs to accommodate immigrant women. C.B. found a friend in her upstairs neighbor, Wilma Curry, whom she described as a “lonely old woman.” C.B. explained that, like herself, the neighbor was also “bored,” and since C.B. was a young woman trying to learn about American society—something, according to C.B., this neighbor could teach her—“we were good company for each other, actually. It worked out very, very nice.” The neighbor directed C.B. to a Methodist Church in their neighborhood where she began to learn English. The church outreach group provided her with a much-needed support system that eased her adjustment to life in Houston.

Informed by a Spanish-speaking neighbor about a church support group for immigrant women, A.H.K. attended a program hosted by a Baptist church near a Sears store in downtown Houston.⁸² The church hired a yellow school bus for transportation; the buses “pick[ed] up different ladies from their houses or apartment and they used to take them to the church.”⁸³ The church also provided for free childcare on their premises. There, A.H.K. found “ladies [who] were from Mexico, from India, Pakistan, China and American ladies” from whom she “learned a lot also, because people were coming from different places and I had a chance to learn their recipes, their cooking. We would share our cooking and recipes, too.” Through the church, immigrant women met on a weekly basis for two to three hours. In addition to sharing international foods, the women worked together on “handicrafts.” Though church members did not aggressively proselytize,

⁸² The church was likely the South Main Baptist Church.

⁸³ A.H.K., interview, 11-14.

immigrant women were encouraged to ask questions of a religious nature during meals and activities.⁸⁴

South Asian immigrants did not limit their interaction with Americans to their classmates, host families, and church groups. Some immigrants—mainly male since they comprised the majority of South Asian students in Houston through the 1970s—dated and married outside of their national groups. I.S. recalled a Pakistani friend who married a German woman, two Pakistani brothers who married white Americans, and another who married an Afghani woman. She remembered a few other men who married white women but ended up divorcing them.⁸⁵ C.B. and her husband regularly hosted small parties at their apartment where their Indian and Pakistani friends often brought their white American and African American girlfriends.⁸⁶ Several other interviewees affirmed that some of their Indian and Pakistani friends became romantically involved with white and, occasionally, African American women. P.M. met and married a Chinese student at UH, and after some initial hesitation, both his and his wife's families accepted their choice to marry outside of their ethnic groups. Most South Asian men married women from India and Pakistan, but this relationship did not represent the full range of interaction that occurred. Though some may have faced social stigmatization as a result of their mixed dating, the loosening of racial norms in parts of the South—at least in urban areas—helped create an environment where white woman and non-white men, and certainly where non-whites of various backgrounds, could be together.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 11-14.

⁸⁵ I.S., interview, 32.

⁸⁶ C.B., interview.

In their processes of building their ethnic identities, immigrants from India and Pakistan incorporated components of modernity (i.e. the urban, the educated, the worldly, the professional, and the national). Of the national, immigrants formed nation-bound student organizations. Since the Pakistan Students Association (PSA, formed in the mid-1960s) and the Indian Students Association (ISA, at least as early as 1960, though very possibly earlier) were established at the University of Houston, the university functioned as the locus for the public performance of ethnic community. Universities are often the hub of college-towns and larger urban areas, supporting local economies with a steady supply of skilled labor; but South Asian students and immigrants utilized the campus for organizing shows in which they produced and performed emergent, localized, diasporic cultures. By doing so, they united and created community around notions of music, fashion, and film. For South Asians, the university ethnic organization experience fostered the development of future community leaders; those who would soon settle in the greater Houston area and continue their community-building efforts. The activities, interests, and vision of emerging community organizations off-campus, including the Indian Culture Center (ICC) and Pakistan Association of Greater Houston (PAGH), were led by many of the same highly educated professionals who had been active in ISA and PSA.

Organizing one of the most popular ISA-sponsored campus events—the Hindi film screenings—Indian students ordered sixteen millimeter films from an Indian supplier in Chicago.⁸⁷ These films were part of a supply chain of films sent from India to major

⁸⁷ A.K., interview, 12.

cities in the U.S.⁸⁸ The films were screened initially at smaller rooms at the University Center but by 1969 at the much-larger-capacity Liberal Arts Auditorium (later renamed Agnes Arnold Hall). Paying one dollar admission, Indians and Pakistanis gathered to watch films on occasional Saturday evenings.⁸⁹ By 1970, attendance at the movie screening ranged from 250 to 300 people and included both students and members of the broader Indo-Pak community.⁹⁰ Aside from these imports directly from India's entertainment industry, Houston's Indians also organized "variety entertainment show[s]" for smaller Indian audiences of fifty to one hundred people.⁹¹ Within one week of her arrival in Houston, R.K. performed a dance sequence at an ISA-planned event in "celebration of India's independence."⁹² In addition, prominent Hindi singers and actors such as Mukesh and Asha Parekh also traveled to the US on tour, including Houston as a stop.⁹³ According to R.P., who helped organize the stage events in the mid-1970s, she and other Indian immigrants sold 180 to 200 tickets and cooked food for as many attendees. R.P. claimed that the show featuring Parekh drew in an audience of over one thousand.

By the mid-1970s, the Pakistan Student Association also arranged large-scale variety shows that included skits, song performances, and fashion shows. Often, these

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ *International News*, International Student Services, University of Houston (Houston, 29 October 1969).

⁹⁰ S.P., interview by author, 2 March 2008 (interview in author's possession).

⁹¹ A.K., interview, 12.

⁹² R.K., interview by author, 2 August 2007 (MDA), 21.

⁹³ R.P., interview by author, 15 November 2007 (South Asian American Digital Archive-still processing). Mukesh Chand Mathur, popularly known as Mukesh was a playback singer for the Hindi film industry from 1941 to 1976. Asha Parekh was active in the Hindi film industry as an actress since childhood and as a director and producer since the 1990s.

shows, held at the university, coincided with Pakistan Independence Day celebrations. Like the ISA-hosted events on campus, students and immigrants attended the shows. By the mid-1980s, these shows drew hundreds of audience members. Regarding the PSA and its earlier shows, N.F. explained,

There was a Pakistan Organization but it was, of course, a very small group and it was basically run by students at University of Houston... When I came to America, they had a function and I think it was Independence, 14th of August function. And I had just been married a few months. They came up to me and they said, 'Oh, you know, we are having a modeling show and we want to show our clothes.' They knew I had the original wedding dresses and the saris and all and they said, 'Can you please come and display those?' And I am like, 'wow!'— modeling was such a big deal because we could never do it back home. And I said, 'O.K., sure. No problem.' My husband never had a problem. And we had a fashion show... We had a wonderful time.⁹⁴

N.F. modeled clothing in the fashion show, an interest her father did not allow her to fulfill in Karachi. When she was sixteen, she was asked to model clothes for a silk textile manufacturer, to which her father responded, “I will disown you... What are you going to do, go show off your body?” Years later, N.F. reasoned that “that was the mentality then. That is how they protected us, that our girls cannot do” modeling.⁹⁵ For some, the

⁹⁴ N.F., interview, 9-10.

⁹⁵ N.F., interview.

performance of culture in a host country may allow for creative, political, or social expression in ways deemed unacceptable in home societies. Simultaneously, immigrants are constrained in the ways that they can perform and consume what they deem ethnic culture since they must adhere to new societal norms and forms of expression. For example, whereas in India and Pakistan, music may have been consumed through a multiplicity of sources (daily radio programming, wedding celebrations, the homes of friends and relatives, sounds escaping from the open-concept housing commonly found throughout large cities in South Asia), in Houston in the seventies, it was specifically channeled through one weekly radio broadcast, very occasional concerts, and the small collections in friends' homes.

Likewise, the wearing of “ethnic” clothing—an important marker for many immigrants, especially women—was now sometimes limited in the frequency and locale of wear. Professionalized immigrant men wore only standard “American” or “western” attire to work. Women often exhibited some flexibility in dress, avoiding rigid adherence to any one mode of dress. I.S. considered it important to wear Pakistani clothing. She noted, “I dressed in *desi* clothes almost all my life in the beginning. Then, I remember now, the first time when I wore pants... We didn't get permanent residency in America so we had Canadian residency. And I had to buy pants because it gets so cold over there and we couldn't survive in *desi* clothes, especially a sari. So, that was the first time when I had made some western clothes.”⁹⁶ In the hospital lab where she worked, A.H.K. used to wear a combination of American pants and tunic-style shirts. Initially, both I.S. and A.H.K. sewed most of their clothes. A.H.K. explained that she preferred the clothing of

⁹⁶ I.S., interview, 34-35.

her own “culture” because its length and looseness appealed to her sense of modesty.⁹⁷

I.S. also commented that she sewed “Pakistani” clothes for her daughter because it was not possible to purchase these clothes in Houston. South Asian immigrant women and to a lesser extent, men, wore ethnic attire to their own social gatherings and public events such as concerts or movie screenings. Clearly, to immigrants, the wearing of clothing considered ethnic was an important marker of authentic (albeit gendered) Indian or Pakistani identity.

That community activities occurred in public spaces and at a university campus was significant for several reasons. First, the selection of specific forms of visual and aural entertainment signaled to viewers, culturally sanctioned practices, not only in terms of the tropes contained within skits or songs but in the genre of the “skit” or “song” or “fashion show” itself. These entertainment genres come to represent Indian-ness or Pakistani-ness in ways that may not have been the case in India or Pakistan. While student organizations at universities in the Subcontinent produced the same genres of entertainment, the meanings of viewership (and of performance) were culturally mediated to produce localized experiences there and here. The same dramatizations enacted in diaspora were complicated for participants by feelings of nostalgia and the production of diasporic memory. Second, for South Asian immigrants, public performance became a claim to ethnicity—a claim to one’s ethnic self. Simultaneously, by consciously inhabiting a physical space in “America,” it was a claim to American-ness. This was the case even if participants insisted that they were preserving *their* culture. For example, South Asian immigrants organized and participated in International Day festivals in

⁹⁷ A.H.K., interview.

which ISA and PSA shared “Indian” and “Pakistani” food, and displayed national artifacts and dress. Such uniquely diasporic displays of displaced culture did more than simply share a “foreign” culture; they made it acceptable to exhibit that culture in an American space. Finally, the use of the university—a space that is perceived as having high cultural capital—as the venue conferred both high status and legitimacy to group members in attendance and to their ethnic claims.

Indo-Pak radio programming also provided immigrants with links to familiar cultural forms, though the actual format for radio programming in the U.S. may have differed dramatically from some of the programming found in India and Pakistan in the mid-twentieth century. Broadcast media plays a role akin to print media in its complicity in the commodification of culture and co-opting of ethnic identities, though initially this was not the case. A.K., an amateur music aficionado, hosted the first Indian radio program in Houston in late 1970. A.K. named his show, which aired on FM 90.1, the *Morning Ragas* (*ragas* are musical scales).⁹⁸ He played classical and contemporary Indian music from his own collection of ten LPs and a few pieces purchased from a local home entertainment store that carried “international music,” though he says, “everything was Ravi Shankar in those days.”⁹⁹ In addition, friends contributed music from their personal collections. After hosting the show for about three years, in 1976 A.K. transferred responsibility to Meena Datt, who still operates the longest-running Indian music program in Houston, renamed *Music of India*. By 1984 three more radio programs aired—two Indian and one Pakistani—but Datt’s program remained the most popular

⁹⁸ A.K., interview, 17-18. *Ragas* are musical scales upon which South Asian music is based.

⁹⁹ A.K., interview.

Indian music program in Houston for nearly twenty years. In the process, Datt became a local celebrity within the Indo-Pak community.¹⁰⁰ Listeners from India and Pakistan tuned in on Saturday mornings for her “sometimes nostalgic mix of classical music and Indian film songs, anchored by Datt’s soothing Hindi patter about people’s birthdays and upcoming community events.”¹⁰¹ Tuning in to the weekly airing of Indian music allowed Houston’s Indians and Pakistanis to coalesce around music in a way that they may not have in India or Pakistan. Also, for the listeners of the show—members of that audio, ethnic, imagined community—having airtime on FM radio (even if it was community radio) legitimized their existence as a group.

Just as Hindi-language radio served as a forum for articulating Indian and Pakistani interests and for forming *desi* community, Urdu-language activities served much the same purpose under the banner of the Urdu Literature Group. Formed in 1969 by Pakistani student M.U.K., the group allowed Pakistani and Indian immigrants to gather on a monthly basis to listen to recitations of Urdu poetry (*mushaira*) and music (*ghazal*).¹⁰² Roughly half of the attendees were Muslim (from Pakistan and India), while the other half was Hindu, Sikh, or Jain. The Urdu Literature Group (later, the Urdu Society) was one of the few large-scale events hosted by Pakistanis in Houston; other smaller events included Pakistan Independence Day celebrations in August and Eid dinners—events that would not necessarily be geared toward non-Pakistanis. The

¹⁰⁰ *Indo American News*, Houston, Texas (June 9, 1984).

¹⁰¹ Shaila Dewan, “Desi Dance,” *Houston Press*, 25 September, 1997.

¹⁰² The Mughal court used Urdu as the language of the literati, regardless of religion. Urdu was thus elevated as an art form, enjoyed by for its poetic and expressive qualities. In India and Pakistan today, enthusiasts regularly gather to enjoy recitals. Modern India is home to over twenty major languages, while Pakistan has more than ten major languages spoken within its borders.

enthusiastic attendance of native Hindi and Punjabi speakers was noteworthy in light of the historic politicization of Hindi and Urdu. As linguist Rizwan Ahmad states, the “articulation of language ideologies can also be seen as a form of practice which shapes and is shaped by broader developments in society.”¹⁰³ Thus, language is symbolic of social identities. Ahmad describes Urdu as a language that shares the same “linguistic structure” as Hindi, while Andrew Dalby, author of the *Dictionary of Languages*, calls Urdu the “twin” of Hindi.¹⁰⁴ According to another linguist, Urdu and Hindi share origins in a fourteenth-century language known as Hindi or Hindvi or Dehlvi spoken in and around Delhi.¹⁰⁵ By the late eighteenth century, “Urdu” emerged as the nomenclature in the royal courts for Hindi/Hindvi, though it retained the latter nomenclature for its colloquial form in rural areas of the Delhi region.¹⁰⁶ The Urdu script adopted by the courts was Persian, and in the courtly domain Urdu was developed as a literary art form. In 1837 the British colonial government passed a decree designating Urdu the official language of the courts in the northern and central India, sparking a nationalistic resistance movement advocating for “Hindi” written in the Devanagari script.¹⁰⁷ Urdu began to be described as “defective” and “foreign” and increasingly identified as a Muslim language, though it is inarguably an indigenous, Indo-Aryan language.¹⁰⁸ In the early twentieth

¹⁰³ Rizwan Ahmad, “Scripting a New Identity: The Battle for Devanagari in Nineteenth Century India,” *Journal of Pragmatics* (40: 2008) [1163-1183], 1167.

¹⁰⁴ Andrew Dalby, *Dictionary of Languages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 663.

¹⁰⁵ Mehr Afshan Farooqi, “The ‘Hindi of the ‘Urdu,’” *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 1, 2008, 18-20.

¹⁰⁶ Farooqi, “The ‘Hindi of the ‘Urdu,’” 20.

¹⁰⁷ Rizwan Ahmad, “Scripting a New Identity: The Battle for Devanagari in Nineteenth Century India,” 1164.

¹⁰⁸ Rizwan Ahmad, 1164, 1170.

century, Hindu intellectuals who had previously written prolifically in Urdu switched to the Hindi Devanagari script and “found it socially inappropriate to transfer the Urdu language and script to their children.”¹⁰⁹ As a result of these “language ideological debates,” Lt. Governor Antony MacDonnel ordered that Hindi join Urdu as an official language of the British Indian lower courts “as a way to balance Hindus against Muslims” in 1900.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the debates had facilitated the polarization of emerging communal identities. These “philological revolutions”—coinciding with and constituting the rise of nationalisms in many parts of the world in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—mobilized writers, teachers, and the nobility around the notion of language as political identity.¹¹¹

Attendees of the Urdu Literature Group in Houston gathered under the conviction that “we were all speaking the language which was Urdu and that made us one group. We had all that togetherness without thinking about which religion you follow or practice. It was just language-based and had nothing to do with religion.”¹¹² The stripping of all social and political meaning from Urdu to render it a neutral space or buffer zone was an attempt to create pan-ethnic community. In 1975 the Urdu Literature Group invited and hosted the renowned classical Indian singer, Mohammed Rafi, and both Indians and

¹⁰⁹ Rizwan Ahmad, 1181. Modern Urdu contains more loan words from Persian and is written in the Indo-Persian script, while Hindi increasingly draws more from Sanskrit. The newly created, independent nation of Pakistan adopted Urdu (and English) as its official languages.

¹¹⁰ Barbara Daly Metcalf, Thomas R. Metcalf, and Barbara Daly Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 2nd ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 134.

¹¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London, New York: Verso, 2006, revised edition) 77, 74-75.

¹¹² A.H.K., interview.

Pakistanis attended Rafi's music concert. Not all Pakistanis voiced an interest in Urdu literature and poetry, and by the same token, neither did all Indians. A.H.K., who attended the Urdu Literature events, recalled that "the Indians speak Hindi but this literature, this part of the poetry, the songs, and music, we all enjoyed the same thing. We were all speaking that language which had made us one group."¹¹³ This interviewee, a Pakistani born in India, recognized a shared linguistic history, and by doing so, constructed a shared identity. This also occurred in India, where Indians of all religious backgrounds could attend *mushaira* and *ghazal* recitals. It is possible that for precisely those reasons suggested by Hindu nationalist reformers of the late eighteenth century—that Urdu was "the handmaid of the old decadent *nawwabi* culture"—and by attending Urdu *ghazal* recitals, Urdu and Hindi speakers could engage with a high-status literary art form.¹¹⁴ Language also served as the lynchpin around which other aspects of identity merged. The Hindi films aired at the University of Houston, for example, served a similar function as the Urdu Literature Group with one notable distinction. The Hindi films were not an appeal to "high culture" but to popular culture and so, carried different cultural

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Barbara D. Metcalf, "Urdu in India the 21st Century: A Historian's Perspective," *Social Scientist* 31 no. 5/6 (2003): 30. According to Metcalf, Urdu, a language which emerged as a "highly developed language of poetry" in the eighteenth century, was spoken by educated, elite Muslims and Hindus across broad areas of north India. The new intelligentsia utilized Urdu in new genres of expression like journalism and novels, while scribes of all religions wrote in Urdu. Thus, as Benedict Anderson indicates in *Imagined Communities*, the literate or "reading classes" were both the producers and consumers of the print-market, linked as a community through the "silent bazaar" of print-capitalism. It is therefore unsurprising that the debates regarding Urdu and Hindi were waged by civil servants and "prominent Hindus" through official memoranda and especially, through local language newspapers. See Rizwan Ahmad, "Scripting a New Identity: The Battle for Devanagari in Nineteenth Century India," 1167-68.

After finishing an interview with K.V.—a South Indian immigrant—I chatted informally with his wife. She asked which language I spoke (Urdu) and then excitedly declared that she too had taken Urdu in school and college. She had learned to read and write it and admired the language. I got the sense that a connection to Urdu was, for some non-native Urdu speakers, a mark of status, something akin to being intimately familiar with Shakespeare's sonnets.

capital. Regardless, language was critically employed in both forms of entertainment in the construction of a South Asian—not Indian or Pakistani—identity. It is important to note, however, that neither the films nor the literature group could have appealed to *all* South Asians, limiting the domain of pan-ethnic identity since many South Asian immigrants did not speak Urdu/Hindi. Both Urdu and Hindi were enforced as national languages on newly created nations, where numerous languages were already spoken.

The formation of identity around language involved English as much as any native languages. All but one or two of the interviewees with whom I spoke were familiar with if not fluent in English. I.S., who had attended Urdu-medium schools in Pakistan, explained that she could “read and write very well” but did not speak as fluently “because unless you speak it, you don't pick up speed.”¹¹⁵ She “picked up speed” fairly quickly, being already familiar with the structure and lexicon of English. No doubt, the ability to comprehend language in an otherwise foreign space created the immediate possibility of belonging, at least in some degree. It could simultaneously create distance. N.F., who was fluent in English due to her training in English-medium schools in Pakistan, found that she too easily slipped into speaking English when conversing with co-ethnics. “People do get offended,” she said, “because they feel like you are trying to put them down” or “show off.”¹¹⁶ Even though listeners understood English, language marked their ethnic identity by signaling group membership. Likewise, in seeking to convey their “cultural

¹¹⁵ I.S., interview, 21.

¹¹⁶ N.F., interview. N.F. added that “with Mom, I used to talk to her over the phone because she would not speak in English. I was not very good at writing in Urdu although I did write, but it would take me forever to write so [we] talked on the phone. But with father and with the rest of the family, I always wrote to them in English. So, we never had problems communicating that way,” pg. 18.

heritage,” some immigrant parents insisted on teaching their children their native language. S.A.K. and her husband, both holding advanced degrees from the U.S. and educated in British convent schools in Gujarat, India, decided that with their two children, “we are not replying back to them in English.” They taught them to speak and read Urdu with fluency and speak Gujarati at an elementary level, though with advanced comprehension.¹¹⁷ Another Pakistani immigrant’s daughter (part of the second-generation) had enough Urdu language fluency that she voiced an interest in attending the *ghazal* recital of a renowned Urdu singer, Munni Begum.¹¹⁸

Just as communities constructed their identities around language, they did much the same with food. Food and eating connect people to familiar senses, function as sites around which to organize social events, and facilitate the transfer of cultural knowledge. Anthropologist Roberta James writes that “ethnic food serves as an important vehicle for the production of ethnic authenticity....”¹¹⁹ Ethnic foods represent a common social space for members of an ethnic group. In the case of Indian and Pakistani immigrants, those members practiced a wide range of dietary traditions, far more diverse than the standard fare at Indian restaurants today. Yet, collective food habits also functioned as a unifying force. According to historian Tracy Poe, “a critical point for analysis [are the] ways in which immigrants from differing regional groups came to perceive themselves as part of distinct American ‘ethnic’ groups, with common traditions, heritage, and ways of

¹¹⁷ S.A.K., interview, 36-37.

¹¹⁸ I.S., interview, 44.

¹¹⁹ Roberta James, “Halal Pizza: Food and Culture in a Busy World,” *Australian Journal of Anthropology* (April 15, 2004).

eating.”¹²⁰ The very act of attempting to “make passable Indian and Pakistani dishes” by combining easily obtainable Indian foodstuffs with available substitutes from local grocery stores, represented a desire to maintain an ethnic identity.¹²¹ P.B., an early female immigrant from India, recalls, “when we first came in 1971, there were no Indian grocery stores. We would do makeshift groceries like substitute split peas for *tur dal* [lentils]. You could get cumin but coriander and all that, but other things, we didn't use them. We just did without. And then, there were no Indian restaurants. So, not having those facilities certainly made you aware that every minute, you are not in India and that you are on foreign soil.”¹²²

Through the University of Houston's ISA and PSA, new immigrants marked their public identities with food. I.S. described one of the main highlights of the year as the Pakistan Independence Day celebration. Organizers planned invited guest speakers to talk about the history of Pakistan (at that time, the nation was no more than 25 years old) and current events there. “And then, of course,” I.S. emphasized, there was food.¹²³ Unlike in Pakistan where particular, local, or regional foods marked rituals such as weddings or religious observances, in the diaspora, “Pakistani” cuisine marked national identity. Similarly, Indian students hosted or participated in a “food fair,” where otherwise local foods were transformed into national foods, representing “Indian” fare.¹²⁴ By showcasing

¹²⁰ Tracy N. Poe, “The Labour and Leisure of Production as a Mode of Ethnic Identity Building Among Italians in Chicago, 1890-1940,” *Rethinking History* 5:1 (2001).

¹²¹ P.B., interview.

¹²² P.B., interview.

¹²³ I.S., interview, 28.

¹²⁴ P.B., interview, 7.

their ethnic identities with food to non-ethnic publics, immigrants used food as the performance of “culture.”

This is not to suggest that food did not mark identity prior to migration. For many, societies are defined by a number of collective traits of which food is a central trait. When asked about possible differences between southern and western India, V.K. immediately named “food habits,” followed by “language” as the key regional distinctions.¹²⁵ Another Maharashtrian immigrant’s opinion concurred with V.K.’s. Prompted to offer similarities between large regions of India, U.R. shook her head in disagreement, stating, “even their eating habits are different.” She continued, “South Indian food is different than Maharashtrian food. Punjabi food is entirely different from South Indian food. Maybe because the South Indians they live close to the coast. They have more coconut in their meals. But you will never find [that] at all in North Indian food.”¹²⁶ For U.R., difference in identity hinged squarely on culinary difference. Later, she also mentioned that language and clothing varied but emphasized again that “their food habits are different. I don’t know much about it but they are different.”¹²⁷

After migrating to Houston, immigrant women especially struggled to recreate the foods that they were most familiar with. Without the required range of ingredients readily available, they sought means of obtaining those ingredients, creatively substituted other ingredients, or cooked dishes that were similar but did not quite replicate the foods they aimed to prepare. Immigrants employed various strategies in order to procure Indian and

¹²⁵ S.K. and V.K., interview by author, 16 August 2011 (MDA), 50-1.

¹²⁶ U.R., interview by author, 8 June 2011 (MDA), 42-3.

¹²⁷ U.R., interview, 44.

Pakistani foodstuffs. Many newly married Indian and Pakistani women transported their own spices and cooking apparatus when they first migrated to the U.S.¹²⁸ For years, immigrants wrote letters to their home countries requesting that their families send spices with anyone traveling to the U.S.¹²⁹ Still others ordered ingredients from established Indian grocery stores in Chicago and New York.¹³⁰ P.B. suggested that by contrast, in the twenty-first century in Houston's Mahatma Gandhi business district, "it is possible now for a newcomer from India, him or her, never to feel they left India because they can walk into all the familiar sights and sounds [even] if not exactly the same."¹³¹ M.A.S.'s friends and classmates frequently stopped by his and his wife I.S.'s apartment, in eager anticipation of a home-cooked *desi* meal. "They would eat it because [there were] no restaurants, no Pakistani restaurants. So, they were tired of eating whatever they'd cooked—hamburgers, things like this. So, whenever they wanted to eat some *desi* foods, they used to come."¹³² S.A.K., who lived in North Carolina from 1973 to 1977 before moving to Houston, had adjusted her cooking to reflect the dearth of Gujarati ingredients. After so many years, she linked her sense of happiness to familiar foods. She said, "I got some of the spices and all of that from New York by mail order stuff. I was just very lonely." Though she "had gotten used to it" and as much as I "enjoyed cooking...the non-

¹²⁸ A.H.K., interview.

¹²⁹ P.B., interview.

¹³⁰ R.B., 14 June 2007, interview with author (in author's possession); Lal Sardana, interview by Ahmed Afzal, Ahmed Afzal "Transnational Religious and Citizenship Practices and the Pakistani Immigrant Experience in Houston, Texas" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2005), 200; S.A.K., interview, 14-15.

¹³¹ P.B., interview, 26.

¹³² I.S., interview, 27-8.

traditional, non-Indian” foods, she hoped that by moving to a “big city,” she would feel less isolated. In her understanding, food would connect her to the familiar.¹³³

In the late sixties, Indian immigrants approached the owner of Antone’s, an ethnic Greek grocery and sandwich shop, and requested that he order a few basic ingredients for them. He obliged, and soon, Indians and Pakistanis purchased lentils, gram flour, and *achar* (a salted, pickled condiment) from Antone’s, albeit at a high price.¹³⁴ Antone’s owner ordered these dried or jarred food products from Canada, likely from stores in Toronto’s more established ethnic enclave, where Indians had first arrived during the late nineteenth century.¹³⁵ Also, during the late sixties, one Indian family began selling Indian spices by using their garage as a storefront. In 1971 Meena Datt opened Jai Store, the first Indian grocery store in Houston. Located in Rice Village, it catered to the growing Indian and Pakistani population who had begun settling in what were then Houston’s Sharpstown and Westbury “suburbs” but now are neighborhoods in southwest Houston.¹³⁶ Jai Store also supplied ingredients to the only Indian restaurant in Houston, Maharajah Restaurant. Speaking about his struggles as a new immigrant in the mid-seventies, V.A.K. found that adjusting to the hectic pace of life and the cold winter weather were among the most shocking changes for him and his family. The other major change from familiar modes of life was “trying to figure out food.”¹³⁷

¹³³ S.A.K., interview, 14-15.

¹³⁴ R.B., interview; S.P., interview.

¹³⁵ Joan Jensen, *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

¹³⁶ R.B., interview.

¹³⁷ V.A.K., interview by author, 17 August 2011 (MDA), 11.

Surprisingly however, Indians had not demanded the first Indian restaurant in Houston; rather, “the British” were the impetus for the first such restaurant. Having developed a taste for Indian cuisine because of the colonial experience, a group of British expatriates working at Rice University’s computer lab approached Indian co-worker A.K. He recalled that “all these British professors at Rice who used to be around me in the computer lab, they always used to say ‘A.K., man, there is no good curry in this city. You need to do something about it.’”¹³⁸ Seeking a potentially lucrative business opportunity, A.K. and a group of three friends decided to open “Maharajah Indian Restaurant” in Rice Village in 1972. With just \$12,000 as an initial investment, A.K. and his Indian partners (all coincidentally engineers by profession) opened the restaurant on Times Boulevard near Rice University. They hired Indian friends—students from the University of Houston and Rice—to work as dishwashers whom they “paid” in the currency of Indian food, while A.K. and his partners did the cooking. A.K. recalls that since none of them possessed any real skill or talent for Indian cooking, the restaurant failed to attract the more discerning Indian immigrant clientele. A.K. states that “Indians didn’t much care for our cooking but non-Indians loved it.” Despite the willingness to compromise on authentic Indian flavor in their home cooking, even homesick Indians maintained a minimal standard of acceptability; Maharajah Restaurant’s clientele remained largely Anglo. According to A.K. and S.B. (another partner), the restaurant occasionally had weekend wait times of forty-five minutes; but within four years the partners found that managing the business proved too demanding, and they decided to close the restaurant. Several of the owners’ American friends, “the Montrose gang,” attended the “black-tie

¹³⁸ A.K., interview.

morning session” that served as the farewell breakfast.¹³⁹ These highly educated, middle-class Indians went back to their professional engineering jobs.

For immigrants (and Americans, alike), food was a site for the creation of sociality. As an organizing principle, individuals formed social bonds around the preparation and consumption of food. Women members of the ISA constructed a sense of community as they collectively cooked food for ISA events in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴⁰ Social occasions were usually small gatherings arranged around dinner or lunch. Even with non-South Asians, food became shared space—common ground, as when both P.D. and U.R. related that on the occasions that they interacted with non-Indian friends, they dined together at area restaurants.¹⁴¹ P.A. proposed that he “didn’t have any difficulty assimilating and getting along with my colleagues” because he so readily socialized with them over food. When his co-workers invited him out for barbeque, he replied, “not a problem,” and they asked him “how come you eat beef?” P.A. responded, “If you eat it, I eat it. If you don’t eat it, I won’t eat it.” Thus, he reasoned, he “had no problems at all.”¹⁴²

Along the same lines of sociality, food could also be a site for distancing groups of people. M.A.S. insisted that he was unable to form close friendships with Americans because, as observant Muslims, “our biggest problem has always been that we don’t go out to the bar. And their first preference is ‘let’s go.’ That makes a big difference because

¹³⁹ A.K., interview. Other aspects of this restaurant are discussed in chapter one of this work.

¹⁴⁰ P.B., interview, 8.

¹⁴¹ P.D., interview, 15-16; U.R., interview, 10.

¹⁴² P.A., interview, 8.

most of these guys, if you are not drinking...they already have too many friends.”¹⁴³

V.R.B. similarly found it challenging to form deep relationships with Americans, in general, and specifically his co-workers. Because he perceives his vegetarian diet to be “diametrically opposite” to theirs, it has been a “struggle up and until today for the food habits.” As a result, he has had “very little interaction” outside of work with his colleagues. He explained, “you cannot go to a lot of these places because there’s a lot of drinking, a lot of food, a lot of meat.”¹⁴⁴

Finally, immigrants utilized foodways as a means to transmit what for them was an important marker of their “culture.” Several interviewees proudly related that, like themselves, their children were vegetarians. S.K. and V.K. narrated their children’s successes, citing school and extracurricular accomplishments but then were quick to emphasize that “they speak our Marathi language at home” and observed a vegetarian diet. They added, “so they are raised like Indians. [In] that way, I don’t think we missed anything [by] bringing them here. I don’t think so.”¹⁴⁵ In describing his children, V.A.K. began, “we have three kids. So the oldest one—all were born here. All are vegetarians like [my wife] and I, not that we force them to be but they somehow gravitated to that, I guess.”¹⁴⁶ Considering that food habits were not under discussion and that V.A.K. was not prompted to speak about food, his spontaneous, almost automatic allusion to food as one of the first aspects that defined his children suggests the depth of the connection that immigrants form between food and culture. It was only after trying to capture his

¹⁴³ M.A.S., interview, 14.

¹⁴⁴ V.R.B., interview by author, 21 August 2011 (MDA), 12.

¹⁴⁵ S.K. and V.K., interview, 10-11.

¹⁴⁶ V.A.K., interview, 30-1.

children's essence through food that V.A.K. spoke of their ages, educational accomplishments, and careers paths.¹⁴⁷

Even as immigrants established lives and livelihoods in Houston, they maintained ties with their homelands. The strongest of those ties was in the act of visiting India and Pakistan. "We *have* to have a connection [to India], we *have* to go there," declared Bihar-born Z.A., "to talk to people."¹⁴⁸ India and Pakistan have continued to hold the attention of their diasporic subjects. Though immigrants visit and maintain contact with varying levels of frequency, they do return. They accept that the US "is my country now but I started from some other country" and "the first generation cannot break the ties."¹⁴⁹ P.B., whose parents remain in India, offers that "in later years, the last ten years, I felt as my parents were getting on in years, I felt a greater compulsion to visit, be there."¹⁵⁰ Others, particularly immigrant men, visited India only occasionally. Regarding his twice per decade visits, A.K. counted himself among those who "didn't make it that often."¹⁵¹ A.K.'s wife, R.K., however visited India annually, and sometimes two or three times per year, though usually to perform classical Indian dance.¹⁵² The ease and relative affordability of round-trip travel encouraged R.K. to maintain strong links to India. S.A.K. returned to India every year and sometimes twice per year. Her twenty-year-old

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Z.A., interview.

¹⁴⁹ Z.A., interview, 26-7.

¹⁵⁰ P.B., interview, 17.

¹⁵¹ A.K., interview, 14.

¹⁵² R.K., interview, 13, 16.

son had visited India at least fifteen times.¹⁵³ Others who used to return at least twice a year in the seventies and eighties have had close family members move to the U.S. and so have less a reason to return to the Subcontinent in recent years. N.F., who used to return to Karachi “very frequently,” has recently reduced the frequency of her visits. She said, “because of my parents [living here], I don't have a home to go to. I have friends but it is nothing like parents. So, I really don't go that often anymore.”¹⁵⁴ But, she does go.

Immigrants from India and Pakistan in the 1960s and 1970s chose to live in Houston, structuring their lives around “community,” neighborhood, and workplace. Some immigrants had more fluency in the language of Western cultural capital; others less so. Some adjusted more quickly than their co-ethnics. They set about building the foundations by which they defined community, through formal social organizations and informal socialization. The increasing polarization between the representation of “Indian” and “Pakistani” cultures that would occur particularly after 1971, had not yet manifested itself. After the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 and the rise of Zia-ul-Haque’s dictatorship, the Pakistani government transitioned away from founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s vision of a secular democracy toward the formalized orthodoxy of the state apparatus.¹⁵⁵ A similar process of politicized Hindu nationalism would arise in the early 1990s in India as part of the inflammatory demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya. Both of these uber-nationalistic expressions would result in the rewriting of history in school textbooks in the attempt to polarize Indians and Pakistanis—and Hindus and Muslims—against each other. But in the decades immediately following independence, young Indians and

¹⁵³ S.A.K., interview, 35-7.

¹⁵⁴ N.F., interview, 14.

¹⁵⁵ Lall, “Educate to Hate,” 104.

Pakistanis, while harboring the tensions of partition and two wars, nevertheless were educated within curricula that reinforced a secular outlook and remained relatively less concerned with anti-Indian or anti-Pakistani rhetoric. These new citizens, the first generation educated and reared in the rush of infrastructure development after 1947 in both countries, would eventually migrate to the U.S. They would build on prior conceptions of national identity to construct new ethnic identities—or perhaps in part, resurrect old pre-Partition identities. On the threshold of becoming fully invested residents of the U.S., they mapped out their lives in complex ways, some of which I have illustrated in this chapter.

Table 1: Actual Numbers International Students from India and Pakistan at Rice University and the University of Houston (1958-2008, Selected Years)

Year	Indians at Rice	Indians-UH	Pakistanis-Rice	Pakistanis-UH
1958	1	N/A	0	N/A
1960	4	N/A	1	N/A
1964	12	29	2	6
1971	20	117	1	18
1974	19	143	N/A	75
1977	26	198	1	85
1979	19	167	3	67
1984	51	289	10	183
1990	70	260	11	148
1995	58	268	9	174
1999	66	311	7	101
2000	70	363	2	100
2001	83	664	1	240
2005	111	713	2	272
2008	142	N/A	7	N/A

N/A data not available

Sources: *Rice World* Newsletter, Office of International Students and Scholars, Rice University (Houston, 1988-2008); *Registrar's Reports to the President*, Registrar's Office, Rice University (Houston, 1958-1984); *Annual Enrollment Reports*, Office of International Student Admissions, University of Houston (Houston, 1969-1980), *Directory of International Students*, International Student Office, University of Houston (Houston, 1969-1970), *Directory of International Students*, International Student Office, University of Houston (Houston, 1974-1975), *Directory of International Students*, International Student Office, University of Houston (Houston, 1977-1978).

Chapter Three

Articulating the Language of Race through Education

In 2007 Lino Graglia, professor of law at the University of Texas, said to a group of UT students, “blacks and Mexican-Americans are not academically competitive with whites in selective institutions. It is the result primarily of cultural effects. They have a culture that seems not to encourage achievement. Failure is not looked upon with disgrace.”¹ Five years later, Graglia went on to weigh in against affirmative action in college admissions when he said, in a BBC interview, that blacks are less “academically competent” and so, admitting them into selective schools” when they have “large gaps in

¹ James E. Garcia “Hostile Words in Texas – Campus Rallies against University of Texas Law Professor,” July 12, 2007. <http://diverseeducation.com/article/8315/>

qualifications is not the answer.”² Graglia’s comments raised the ire of many, prompting a 10,000-people strong protest led by Rev. Jesse Jackson, but also met with the approval of others. Graglia, in short, voiced convictions common among a large segment of American society today: that the Civil Rights Act and affirmative action legislation *were* necessary in their time but since the act removed racial barriers and affirmative action provided opportunities for racialized groups, such legislation is no longer needed. If, after so many years, African Americans and Latinos did not thrive in academic settings, it was the result of their own cultural weakness, not the fault or responsibility of the larger society.

His quotes mirror the ideas held by South Asian immigrants—ideas that entangle truth, racialized attitudes, and selective contextualization, but most importantly, that assume much about the history and contemporary experience of racialized groups. Asian Americans, and in particular South Asian Americans, are directly implicated in the unfolding Supreme Court hearings that will determine the legality of affirmative action in higher education. Asian Americans would be, by Graglia’s and their own accounting, those who look upon failure with disgrace and so, perform successfully in school—the model minority. Of the four Asian American groups that have signed the amicus brief against the University of Texas’s affirmative action policy, three are Asian Indian organizations.³ Like Graglia and other South Asians, these organizations believe that if African Americans and Latinos cannot gain admission to selective colleges on their own

² Gary Younge, “Positively Flawed? Affirmative Action and the Future of America,” (interview with Lino Graglia), www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0127k6n. Accessed on 1/3/13.

³ Monica Rhor, “UT Affirmative Action Case Divides Asian Americans,” *Houston Chronicle* (18 August 2012), <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Will-UT-affirmative-action-case-hurt-or-help-3798797.php>. Accessed 10/30/12.

merit (as Asian Americans students do), then they should not be given admission at all. The arguments in this case converge around issues of race. This chapter grapples with Indian and Pakistani immigrants' ideas regarding education and how those ideas reveal the learning of racial hierarchies in the United States. After presenting evidence of South Asians' ideas on education and race, I explore the question of why education was of such singular importance to this particular group of immigrants.

Education, both in the Indian Subcontinent and in the United States, plays a central role in the history and memory of post-1965 Indian and Pakistani immigration to the U.S. In the 1960s, access to education in India and Pakistan determined who gained the privilege of migration to the United States, whether as students or employees. These Indian and Pakistani elites had at least a basic familiarity, if not a functional fluency, in the English language as well as training in Western educational approaches. What follows is a brief history of the development of educational institutions in the Subcontinent from the colonial era through the 1960s, specifically examining the constructs that eventually produced migration-ready subjects. I will then explore American investment in India and Pakistan after World War II as it relates to the creation of professionalized migration networks between South Asia and the U.S.

It was no accident that English-speaking, highly educated Indians and Pakistanis comprised almost the entirety of South Asian migration to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Their training and qualifications—a foundation built upon the Western colonial system of education in the subcontinent—all but ensured their collective

economic success as immigrants.⁴ Historically, the British did not prescribe mandatory education for Indians; rather, Indian Hindus demanded it as a gateway to employment within the British Raj. However, “British colonial authorities attempted to control the growth [of universities and schools] and shape the institutions.”⁵ The Mughals and the British shared a common purpose behind education. Prior to the consolidation of British control in the Indian subcontinent, Hindus and Muslims attended *madrasahs*, learning Persian and Arabic as a means to securing employment in the Mughal government. After 1844 English became a ticket to employment within the ranks of the British government. The new English colleges were the pathways to civil service jobs, and Indian Hindus readily grasped the opportunity. Starting in the 1770s and 1780s, small numbers of Indian children had begun attending English-medium missionary schools in Bombay (now Mumbai).⁶ Though some Indians remained critical of the schools’ clear evangelical mission, the overall popularity of English schools among Indians nevertheless grew. According to East India Company records, by 1852, sixty English Education schools operated in four regions of India, with attendance numbering over 9,200 pupils.⁷ By adopting British language and education, middle-class Hindus stood to gain a foothold first in expanding British hegemony over India, and just as importantly, against the Muslim and Hindu aristocracy. Thus, the “Englishing of India” was a response to the

⁴ Much of the following section on the history of higher education in the Indian Subcontinent was originally part of the author’s M.A. thesis: Uzma Quraishi, “Educationally Empowered: The Indian And Pakistani Student Community In Houston, Texas, 1960-1975,” M.A. thesis, University of Houston, 2008.

⁵ Mohumita Roy, “The Englishing of India: Class Formation and Social Privilege,” *Social Scientist* 21, no.5/6 (May-June 1993): 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷ S.N. Mukerji, *History of Education in India*, 5th ed., (Baroda: Acharya Book Depot, 5th ed., 1966), 312.

commercial and administrative needs of the British government (formerly, the East India Company) and subsequent demands by Indians desirous of gainful employment.⁸

Turning their attention to education, Lord William Bentinck, the British Governor-General, had resolved in 1835 that the “government “would impart to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language.”⁹ Henceforth, government funding for indigenous education ceased.¹⁰ Soon after, the Resolution of 1844 specified that graduates of English education schools (i.e. those schools founded and funded as a result of the 1835 Resolution) would be given priority in civil employment positions.¹¹

By the 1880s the first generation of English-educated Indians gave way to their sons, who sought education at newly established “colleges” and universities throughout India. The first universities founded by the British were at Bombay, Madras, and Bengal in 1857. These universities did not lead students in research or instruction; rather, they simply formulated the syllabi to be taught at affiliated colleges and then administered examinations. The function of British colleges and universities was “to provide a test of

⁸ Roy, “The Englishing of India: Class Formation and Social Privilege,” 42-43.

⁹ J. F. Hilliker, “Lord William Bentinck's Resolution of 1835 on Indian Education: A Rejected Draft” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 1 (1981), pp. 40-45; Aparna Basu, “Indian Higher Education: Colonialism and Beyond,” in *From Dependence to Autonomy: The Development of Asian Universities*, eds. Philip Altbach and Viswanathan Selvaratnam, (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 169.

¹⁰ Alan Peshkin, “Education, the Muslim Elite, and the Creation of Pakistan,” *Comparative Education Review* 6, no. 2 (October 1962), 154. Funding for traditional education actually continued, but was exceptional. Slowly, it altogether ended.

¹¹ Roy, “The Englishing of India: Class Formation and Social Privilege,” 71.

eligibility for government employment and to transmit an alien culture.”¹² By mid-century, demand for English education continually surpassed available resources, and between 1885 and 1947 the number of large colleges increased from 21 to 496.¹³ By offering employment as an incentive for completing education at English schools, a precedent was set for creating a culture of higher “Western” education.

By the early twentieth century, it was reported that “all main Bengal leaders had Western education and spoke English.”¹⁴ In less than 100 years, a growing class of English-speaking, Western-educated Indians emerged. Some adopted as well the English manner of dress, speech, taste, and habit.¹⁵ For most, Western education meant social and economic gains.¹⁶ Though overwhelmingly Hindu, these elite slowly included Muslims of the old aristocracy under Mughal rule. In addition, the sons of farmers who would otherwise have remained on the family farm were afforded the opportunity to attend grammar schools, learn English, and vie for positions in local colleges and universities. They became the new middle class, and though very small at first, they married into the more established, elite class. In this way, the number of educated Hindu and Muslim Indians increased.

What exactly did “Western education” mean for Indians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? British-run colleges and universities emphasized British liberal arts

¹² Basu, “Indian Higher Education: Colonialism and Beyond,” in *From Dependence to Autonomy*, by Altbach and Selvaratnam, 171.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁴ Peshkin, “Education, the Muslim Elite, and the Creation of Pakistan,” 156.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁶ Roy, “The Englishing of India: Class Formation and Social Privilege,” 50.

at the expense of scientific and technical knowledge.¹⁷ Since the British aimed to create office clerks, educational emphases lay in the study of English language and literature.¹⁸ Indians themselves sought the expansion of Western institutes of higher learning as evidenced by the consistent increase in attendance, but rather than encouraging academic subjects that could strengthen India by addressing Indian concerns, the British used Indian universities as instruments for strengthening British cultural, intellectual, and political domination.¹⁹ But in the twentieth century, Indian education as envisioned and implemented by the British leaned heavily toward “general” and liberal education to the neglect of independent research and technical training. Even as it mounted in popularity, Western education came under scrutiny from one contingent of Indian society. Nationalistic Indians observed that as a consequence of Western arts biases, Western education neglected any mention of Indian history, culture, and religion and fostered a sense of inferiority among the educated class. Gandhi, for example, lamented the creation of an English-speaking class, saying that it separated the few from the many.²⁰ Still, even as the supply of English-educated Indians outpaced the availability of jobs, “education

¹⁷ Abdus Salam, “Pakistan: The Case for Technological Development,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (1964): 3.

¹⁸ Basu, “Indian Higher Education: Colonialism and Beyond,” in *From Dependence to Autonomy*, by Altbach and Selvaratnam, 173; See also Pawan Agarwal, “Higher Education in India: Growth, Concerns and Change Agenda,” *Higher Education Quarterly* 61:2 (April 2007).

¹⁹ Basu, “Indian Higher Education: Colonialism and Beyond,” 170.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

remained a distant dream for the vast majority.”²¹ Indeed, at independence in 1947, the national literacy rate stood at only 15 percent.²²

From the outset, the leaders of post-colonial India and Pakistan envisioned technologically modern nations. As early as 1947, future prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru “noted that the ‘new India’ was to be closely linked to the world of science....”²³ Pakistan conceived of a similar future for itself, and both nations embarked upon a path of rapid industrialization. Building upon the existing educational infrastructure and with abundant foreign aid, universities continued to be the path to upward mobility for some. While increasingly incorporating national cultures, histories, and languages, knowledge and implementation of Western scientific and technological innovations would continue to be advantageous to India’s future. Building an independent India and a new Pakistan required, among other anchors, modern industry. Both nations looked to the future with an eye on rapid industrialization, which depended largely upon an educated and technologically skilled labor force largely comprised of engineers and technicians, skilled and semi-skilled workers.²⁴ Part of this project of modernization was the expansion of the university system, a post-World War II phenomenon transpiring around the world as well

²¹ Roy, “The Englishing of India: Class Formation and Social Privilege,” 54

²² Ibid., 55 and Basu, “Indian Higher Education: Colonialism and Beyond,” in *From Dependence to Autonomy*, by Altbach and Selvaratnam, 178.

²³ Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 2000), 75.

²⁴ Donald Lux, “Technical Education in India,” *Comparative Education Review* 7, no. 3 (February 1964): 301.

as in India and Pakistan. For example, higher education in the United States saw unprecedented expansion in the postwar years.²⁵

Both India and Pakistan faced enormous hurdles after 1947, though Pakistan's were much steeper. At its creation, Muslim-dominated Pakistan inherited only 17.5 percent of the Raj's financial assets, fewer than two hundred experienced civil servants, no government infrastructure, and insufficient office space.²⁶ In addition, Pakistan itself was divided into two geographic entities with over a thousand miles of hostile India in between. Its success as an independent state seemed all but impossible. Similarly impoverished India also bore its share of nation-building hurdles, including forging a national identity for its 357 million people with numerous ethnic, linguistic, religious, and caste distinctions.²⁷ The full discussion of nation-building and foreign policy between India, Pakistan, and the United States is beyond the scope of this project, yet some background information about the state and extent of development in the Indian subcontinent after 1947, as well as the role of the largest source of aid (i.e. the U.S.), provides a necessary context for subsequent migrations.

In 1947 neither India nor Pakistan attracted any strategic interest from the United States. Within a decade, however, South Asia, seemingly far removed from superpower competition, became a theater for the ideological Cold War between Russia and the United States.²⁸ In the attempt to build alliances, the United States injected large amounts

²⁵ André Béteille, *Universities at the Crossroads* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

²⁶ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery* (New York: Columbia University Press: 1994) 66.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁸ McMahon; Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*.

of economic aid toward scientific and technical development in Indian and Pakistani institutes of higher education. At independence, approximately 20 universities existed in India along with 636 smaller colleges and thousands of two-year, specialized-training centers.²⁹ These colleges and polytechnics offered specialized basic training in medicine, engineering, law, or commerce, etc., serving as a transition between high school and university, where students studied another two years for a bachelor's degree. In 1948 the Indian government established a commission to periodically assess the state of higher education in the country, plan appropriate changes, and commit to the state expansion of higher education.³⁰ Older, established universities expanded tremendously in size and scale.³¹ By 1962, 4,555 students were enrolled in doctoral programs in India, another 66,000 at the master's level, and 4.5 million Indians worked toward their bachelor's degrees.³² While the raw numbers seem impressive, the total number of educated Indians accounted for less than 2 percent of the population. In the effort to "democratize" education, the Indian government actively sought to "open up the universities to all sections of society," that is, to include minorities such as Dalits, women, and Muslims and their efforts were successful inasmuch as the number of these groups attending

²⁹ Mukerji, *History of Education in India*, 314-315; N. Jayaram, "Higher Education in India" in *Asian Universities: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges* by Philip G. Altbach and Toru Umakoshi, eds. (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 91; André Béteille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 45. Estimates range between these authors, with Béteille stating that India had 30 universities at independence and Jayaram arguing for sixteen universities.

³⁰ N. Jayaram, "Higher Education in India," in *Asian Universities* by Altbach and Umakoshi, 88.

³¹ Béteille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 4.

³² *Ibid.*, 319.

university increased. Still, university students continued to hail largely from the middle and upper classes, especially before the educational reforms of 1977.³³

At formation, Pakistan had only two major universities. Prior to 1947 the majority of professors were Hindu, and in the immense and turbulent cross-migration that occurred at Partition, most of these Hindu educators moved to India, “stripping the faculties of much of their academic strength.”³⁴ Muslim academics filled some of the open positions. Soon after its founding, Pakistan had thirty-one liberal arts colleges but only one agricultural college and one engineering college for all of East and West Pakistan.³⁵ In addition to the large universities, numerous smaller, subject-specific “institutes” or colleges operated under the administration of the universities. As in India, the aristocracy in Pakistan, while well-versed in Western classics, lacked expertise in the applied sciences and technology. By 1950 four technical universities had been established. In 1952 the American philanthropic organization, Ford Foundation, opened three polytechnic institutes to “fill the gap” between vocational schools and engineering universities, thereby opening the scope of opportunity to Pakistanis outside of the aristocracy.³⁶ As the new industrial-capitalist class of elites pressed for regional autonomy, securing their grip on economic— and consequently— political power, the growing middle class sent their sons and daughters to newly created universities in hopes

³³ Béteille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 17, 47.

³⁴ Robert J. Kibbee, “Higher Education in Pakistan: Problems that Beset the Student Community,” *Journal of Higher Education* 33, no. 4 (April 1962): 182.

³⁵ Abdus Salam, “Pakistan: The Case for Technological Development,” 3.

³⁶ George F. Gant, “The Ford Foundation and Pakistan,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 323 (May 1959): 152. The role of the Ford Foundation is more fully examined later in this chapter.

of upward mobility.³⁷ In addition, private entities established several secondary educational institutions that prepared the small middle class for universities both within and outside of Pakistan. The system of privatized education operated “at costs out of the reach of the majority of Pakistanis.”³⁸ By 1962 the Pakistani government had opened four more universities, and although student enrollment increased, the universities faced a shortage of qualified teachers.³⁹

The United States contributed to the founding of institutions in India and Pakistan that would produce scientists, engineers, teachers, entrepreneurs, and civil servants.⁴⁰ This class of professionals was necessary to the survival of countries just establishing independent governments, currencies, and international connections.⁴¹ In India, a rambling, disorganized system of education inherited in 1947 nevertheless provided a small but growing section of the Indian citizenry with a foundation upon which to build.⁴² In the neighboring country of Pakistan, the educational infrastructure evolved into a workable educational system most heavily utilized by a growing middle class. Future emigrants recounted their experiences in these educational systems, highlighting their own accomplishments, sometimes their father’s or grandfather’s occupations, and less

³⁷ John Galvani, “Introduction to Pakistan,” *MERIP Reports* 16 (April 1973): 4.

³⁸ Marie Lall, “Educate to Hate,” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* 38, no. 1 (January 2008), 107.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Gant, “The Ford Foundation and Pakistan,” 150-1. For example, the Ford Foundation’s stated aim was to “establish and strengthen key institutions... necessary for the development and training of personnel” in Pakistan.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴² Compared to other non-western countries’ systems of higher education in the late 1940s, the Indian university system was already far more expansive and stable. Bétéille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 44.

often, their mother's contributions to their education. It becomes quickly evident that the expanding, urban middle class created in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries emerge as recipients of opportunities for advancement and eventually, migration. Middle-class and upper-income parents in India and Pakistan encouraged their children, such as those who narrated the following vignettes, to obtain university education as a pathway to employment and income.

For example, N.M., born in 1930 as the eldest of nine children, grew up on farm in Dahod, western India. Her father, a large-scale farmer who had a master's degree in agricultural science, was himself the son of a schoolteacher. Neeta's father insisted that all of his children obtain the advanced education of a master's degree or more. Neeta became a doctor of obstetrics and midwifery, receiving short-term training in Ireland in 1956. She met her future husband, also from western India, in the UK, and they married in India in 1958. She described him as "a scholar all his life," not in the sense that he was an intellectual or an academic but that he was dedicated to his studies from grade school onward. Also the son of a schoolteacher in the state of Saurashtra, he was committed to "get first [ranking], to get ahead, otherwise he wouldn't get a scholarship" and could not continue his studies. As a Jai and Tata Scholar, he obtained his Ph.D. in power engineering in England.⁴³

I generally begin interviews by asking immigrants to tell about themselves, their childhood and background. Some people talk about where they were born and where they had lived growing up. N.M. structured her opening narrative around the centrality of education in her and her husband's lives before they immigrated. She noted how, against

⁴³ These were large companies in India that sponsored scholarships in technical education.

seemingly difficult odds, her father and all of her siblings were educated. Educational success was theirs because they worked so very hard for it. Though N.M. memorialized her own mother as a farmer's wife who taught her children the value of "hard work," she began the description of her mother by saying she was "an only child who didn't study much, because she didn't like to study." N.M. continued, "after marriage, my father forced her to study [and taught her] how to read and write, so she can write letters and everything or read books."⁴⁴ Clearly, in constructing a narrative of her life, N.M. identified "education" as the major theme.

Within this framework, women were simultaneously upheld as virtuous wives and mothers in the domestic sphere but also as integral actors in the nation-building project, though only in some professional spheres. None of the women interviewees opted for engineering as an educational aspiration or career choice, although several spoke of medicine as an option that their families encouraged.⁴⁵ Women especially were able to take advantage of the expansion of higher education that occurred at independence. Because universities were now established in most cities, women were no longer barred from pursuing education due to long-distance travel and having to live away from home.⁴⁶ Just as in the U.S., the prospect of women's attendance in universities was slow

⁴⁴ N.M., interview by author, 22 December 2011 (SAADA), 4.

⁴⁵ It is unclear to me why this was the case, since in both India and Pakistan, students are "tracked" into careers based on standardized national exams taken after 10th and 12th grades. Only top scoring students can opt to continue into highly professionalized fields including medicine and engineering or even consider completing a bachelors degree. Because of the strict meritocratic structure of the educational system, it is entirely conceivable that women should have entered engineering education, but in fact, they did not. Rather, if they pursued occupations, it seems that they entered medicine or business majors. Though I have not located any scholarship on this topic, one possible explanation is that engineering was considered a "masculine" field—one that in the U.S., is still dominated by men—and so was socially considered inappropriate for women to pursue.

⁴⁶ Bétéille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 14.

to gain popular acceptance. Bétéille stresses that although women have benefitted tremendously from the university system, “all castes and communities are not equally represented among them” and that “there is a larger upper-caste bias among women than men.”⁴⁷ He argues that women’s admission into universities has been a “middle-class phenomenon”—part of a system in which the middle class continues to enjoy access to networks that others can not so readily access.⁴⁸

Almost a decade after Partition, M.K. graduated from high school in Rampur, India, and without his father’s approval joined his cousins who had long since migrated to Karachi, Pakistan. His father had hoped M.K. would join Aligarh University in northern India, but instead M.K. wanted “something new and different.”⁴⁹ In 1947 his parents had remained on their *jagir*—small parcels of land gifted to military leaders—uninterested in migration, perhaps because “they were old-fashioned,” M.K. suggested.⁵⁰ For two years after M.K. left for Karachi, his father refused to communicate with him, but by 1957 M.K. had found a job with the U.S.-funded Pakistan Institute of Cotton Research and had gained admission to the University of Karachi.⁵¹ With his son again committed to his education, the father relented and, taking his family with him, travelled to Karachi. After three months there, he decided it was time to permanently migrate and rejoin other family members; but upon returning to Rampur for formal arrangements, he

⁴⁷ Bétéille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 26.

⁴⁸ Bétéille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 27.

⁴⁹ M.K., interview, 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Qazi Tauqir Azam and Robert E. Evenson, “Agricultural Research Productivity In Pakistan,” Pakistan Agricultural Research Council/Economic Growth Center, (Yale University, October 1990).

succumbed to illness and died. M.K., though distraught, worked toward his B.S. with Honors followed by his master's degree. In early 1966 he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for study in the U.S. "I always had wanted to do a Ph.D.," he explained. M.K. entered the U.S. as a graduate student in physics in the summer of 1966.

Others' stories followed a pattern similar to M.K.'s educational course. "It was really a dream of mine to come to America for higher education," intoned M.J.K., another Pakistani immigrant who entered the U.S. on a student visa in January 1976.⁵² He had already completed two bachelor's degrees, one in mathematics and physics, the other in civil engineering, at NED College in Karachi. At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, M.J.K. obtained a master's degree in engineering. S.M. and P.D., both having privileged upbringings with their schooling completed at boarding facilities, attended the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology for their baccalaureate training. They moved to the U.S. between 1968 and 1974 for their master's and doctorate degrees in engineering.

In 1947, H. Khan, his wife, and their five young children migrated from Madras, India, to Karachi, Pakistan. Khan had never attended university, having only completed high school. Likewise, his parents had no advanced education either, but as his daughter A.H.K. described him, "he was very broad-minded [and] interested in reading" and self-learning.⁵³ A.H.K.'s mother, A. Begum, had completed only primary school. After A. Begum and H. Khan were married, he began teaching her English, in which he was functionally conversant. As their children grew up, A. Begum helped them with their

⁵² M.J.K., interview by author, 25 January 2007 (MDA), 1-2.

⁵³ A.H.K., interview by author, 17 July 2007 (MDA), 9.

homework and their English. As parents, they encouraged their children to excel in school. “We had to have focus for a goal and that was for higher education,” recalled A.H.K..⁵⁴ Unlike messages of ladylike domesticity and fashion-forwardness that A.H.K. felt were enforced on other girls and young women, A.H.K. was taught “you have to do something better than what an average lady or girl does.”⁵⁵ She came to strongly aspire for “something better than just a normal, common lady's desire and wish.”⁵⁶ A.H.K. remembered her father's rationale as: “you should have that strong background and standing so that if some kind of hardship comes or something like that, you can face it, and you can stand up and have your own life.”⁵⁷ She estimated that, of her female peers, some 70 to 80 percent aimed for higher education, though financial circumstances prevented some from attaining their goals. In her own extended family of numerous cousins the completion of at least some college was the norm, though she judged her father to be even more progressive than most in regards to educating his daughters. A.H.K. and her three sisters all attended university; one became a doctor, the other a town planner with a master's degree in geography, and the youngest, a teacher. A.H.K. obtained a master's in biology.⁵⁸

At age nineteen, K.S. married earlier than many of the other South Asian women immigrants with whom I spoke, and though her parents encouraged her marriage at this comparatively young age, they also supported her pursuance of college training prior to

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 6.

marriage. She elaborates: “After twelfth grade I just went to the SNTD College for one year and I did STC—a teacher’s course, and I did the two year-course...then I married.”⁵⁹ Her father worked as a typist or stenographer.

In the postwar years, the United States sought to strengthen its ties with the subcontinent by a unique “investment” in India and Pakistan. The British had departed India “with an almost indecent sense of haste... leaving a myriad of problems in their wake.”⁶⁰ The U.S. worked to “maintain a significant presence there [India and Pakistan] through economic aid and loans, technical assistance, and cultural exchange programs by heaping a massive \$12 billion in total aid to India and Pakistan between 1947 and 1965.”⁶¹ Sociologist Saskia Sassen writes that, in creating conditions that induced migration, the United States developed a “pattern ... of direct foreign investment in production for export [starting in the 1960s].” Inadvertently “investing” in export-ready labor in India and Pakistan rather than in export-ready goods, the U.S. exposed South Asians to American values and approaches, after which the notion of emigration to the U.S., albeit temporary in their minds, may have seemed more plausible than before.⁶² Indeed, both the American government and charitable groups have provided aid to many nations in need, though it must be noted that aid in South Asia created a much-needed labor force for the U.S. American aid to India and Pakistan far surpassed that of many

⁵⁹ K.S., interview by author, 21 December 2011 (SAADA), 3.

⁶⁰ Shirin R. Tahir-Kheli, *India, Pakistan, and the United States: Breaking with the Past* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997), 30.

⁶¹ McMahon, 8. Additional source as per M.A. thesis. Also contextualize this by giving comparative figures.

⁶² Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 151; Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: New Press, 1998), 40, 45.

other countries. In the aftermath of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, however, the United States gradually withdrew intense involvement in these two struggling nations.⁶³

Concurrently, American immigration policy, which had just undergone the most restrictive period in its existence, began to liberalize. The nascent Cold War placed India in a strategic bargaining position. In hopes of “strengthening ties with India” and its soon-to-be-victorious independence movement, the U.S. Congress passed the Luce-Cellar Act of 1946.⁶⁴ The act repealed the exclusion of Indian nationals, allowing a total quota of 100 to enter the U.S. annually. It also extended the possibility of citizenship by naturalization to Indians, with Filipinos added just prior to passage of the legislation, after they (and other Asians) had suffered several decades of exclusionary immigration and naturalization policies. Luce-Cellar proved to be a turning point in the repealing of discriminatory immigration laws; however, the most significant change in immigration policy occurred with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which completely abolished the national-origins quota system and eliminated race or ancestry as grounds for immigration. It also allowed for skill-based and family-reunification immigration. President Kennedy envisioned a system that “meant both an increase in fairness to applicants and in benefits to the United States.”⁶⁵ On the one hand, the 1965 act reflected the United States’ recognition that its immigration policies were discriminatory and racist, but on the other hand, it reflected a crucial need for skilled foreign labor. It expanded opportunities for highly trained or skilled persons to immigrate, creating

⁶³ McMahon, 336.

⁶⁴ Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy 1850-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 37.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 39.

preferences for professionals, scientists, and engineers. Though proponents of the law emphasized its corrective nature, many also anticipated the boost to the American economy and technological competitiveness that skilled immigrants would provide—a serious national concern since 1957 when the Russian launching of the first Sputnik shocked Americans. The United States responded to this “crisis” by expanding advanced education in the natural sciences and by tapping potential global sources of labor. In the wake of Sputnik I, the U.S. Congress founded the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and passed the National Defense Education Act, while the National Science Foundation arranged for thousands of graduate scholarships in the sciences. Still, many felt that additional sources of skilled labor and scientific scholarship were needed. With the American economy in the midst of “unprecedented expansion and transformation,” the U.S. scrambled to fulfill the demand for engineers, scientists, and doctors.⁶⁶

In the early 1960s the Indian state had at its disposal a virtual army of engineers and scientists. By contrast, Pakistan had little to offer in the way of fully trained labor but much in trainable labor with a solid foundation in and a commitment to higher education. In 1950 India had 188,000 qualified physicians, engineers, technicians, and scientists. In 1961, 13,820 students graduated from Indian institutes of higher education in 1961.⁶⁷ By 1968, the numbers had increased to include 332,000 engineers and 122,000 physicians.⁶⁸

The Indian economy, however, lacked a sufficient supply of jobs to employ qualified

⁶⁶ Surinder M. Bhardwaj and N. Madhusudana Rao, “Asians Indians in the United States: A Geographic Appraisal,” in *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* by eds. Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach, and Steven Vertovec, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 199.

⁶⁷ Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, 76.

⁶⁸ S.K. Ghaswala, “Using What’s Available,” *Science News* 96, no. 14 (Oct 4, 1969): 314.

college graduates, and thus graduates faced high rates of unemployment in India.⁶⁹

Between 1965 and 1968, unemployment among engineers rose from 16,500 to 56,700.⁷⁰

Economists estimated that this rate would increase to 100,000 by 1974.⁷¹ It was

understood that employment opportunities, especially for the educated, were limited.

Over the subsequent decades the economy expanded but even as late as 1980, the number of highly educated graduates in India significantly outnumbered available jobs, resulting in the “overproduction of educated persons.”⁷²

The American perception of a technological gap coincided with India and Pakistan’s need to industrialize. Within the larger migration of “worldwide professional cultures” in the 1960s and 1970s (also known as “brain drain”), thousands of South Asian students seeking advanced training in technical fields were increasingly drawn toward American universities and away from Great Britain.⁷³ Since the colonial encounter, students from the Indian subcontinent had traveled to the U.K. for advanced degrees. For example, both Nehru and Gandhi obtained degrees in England and later formed the core of the new Indian nationalist leadership. Similarly, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan’s first governor-general, studied law in London before returning to India. For decades, after completion of higher education in Britain, most Indians returned to India, many

⁶⁹ Michael Herbert Fisher, Shompa Lahiri, and Shinder S. Thandi, *A South-Asian History of Britain: Four Centuries of Peoples from the Indian Sub-continent* (Oxford; Westport, Conn.: Greenwood World Pub., 2007), 162.

⁷⁰ Ghaswala, “Using What’s Available,” 314.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² J.P. Naik quoted in N. Jayaram, “Higher Education in India,” 91. Originally in J.P. Naik, *The Education Commission and After* (New Delhi: Allied, 1982), 163.

⁷³ Surinder M. Bhardwaj and N. Madhusudana Rao, “Asians Indians in the United States: A Geographic Appraisal,” in *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* by Clarke, Peach, and Vertovec, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 199.

determined to apply their knowledge toward the good of their nation. After independence, even as elite South Asians criticized Western ideals of materialism and individualism, they understood the necessity of scientific and technological knowledge for the nation-building project.

In addition to the easing of immigration requirements in the United States, three factors help explain the significant shift in South Asian immigration trends from the U.K. to the U.S. First, migration to the United States appealed to Indians and Pakistanis due to increasing anti-Asian sentiment in Britain. The 1968 “rivers of blood” speech by Enoch Powell, a Conservative Party member of the British Parliament (MP), gave voice to this popular racist sentiment, while the British Parliament’s passage of restrictive immigration acts in 1962 and 1965 codified popular fears.⁷⁴ In contrast, Indian and Pakistani students found relatively open receiving societies in the major cities of the United States, particularly on college campuses. Second, some South Asians refused to migrate to England, homeland of their former colonizers. A long, complicated, and antagonistic history with England made some Indians and Pakistanis leery of any future connection with the Empire.⁷⁵ Finally, American universities offered newly created scholarships, assistantships, fellowships (through the National Science Foundation), and loans to international students.

Indians and to a lesser extent, Pakistanis have comprised a major portion of international students at American universities since the early sixties. Comprising the largest group of foreign students (10 percent) in the United States, 6,000 Indians students

⁷⁴ The first Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1962 required immigrants to obtain employment vouchers prior to entry. The White Paper of 1965 placed a quota of 8,500 work vouchers.

⁷⁵ The conclusions in this paragraph are based on several interviews.

attended universities in the United States in 1963.⁷⁶ Some 2,000 Indian students pursued engineering majors, while relatively few studied education or agriculture.⁷⁷ Students typically earned undergraduate degrees in India's many universities, but graduate education was superior and more readily available overseas. With Pakistan's educational situation in a more formative state than that in India, Pakistani students often fulfilled all of their university training overseas.

Though professionals and the highly educated emigrated for any number of reasons, economist Walter Adams suggests reasons that are relevant to Indian and Pakistani immigration: higher salaries, better opportunities for professional research, and high unemployment in sending countries. Others maintain that service economies such as that found in the U.S. after 1965 have greater need for and more employment opportunities for the highly educated.⁷⁸ Because of the largely agrarian economies of India and Pakistan in the 1960s and '70s, jobs in engineering and the sciences were more abundant in the U.S. and particularly so in the Sunbelt cities of the South. Additionally, many immigrants have stated in oral history interviews that they left India or Pakistan in search of adventure. Though detailed information on comparative salaries is unavailable, immigrants themselves have indicated that the income difference was significant. Even educated European immigrants experienced a substantial salary increase—more than double—after gaining employment in the United States.⁷⁹ Hence, for a variety reasons, as

⁷⁶ Mehdi Kizilbash, "The Employment of Returning U.S. Educated Indians," *Comparative Education Review* 8, no. 3 (December 1964): 320.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁷⁸ Pawan Agarwal, "Higher Education in India," 203.

⁷⁹ Judith A. Fortney, "International Migration of Professionals," *Population Studies* 24 no. 2 (July 1970): 229.

students graduated with bachelor's or master's degrees in India and Pakistan, they considered migration to the United States. Many sought additional schooling, and due in part to institutional linkages between the United States and South Asia, migration to the U.S. was increasingly viewed as a viable option. Though jobs could be found in their home countries, opportunities were limited. In addition, the quality of higher education in the sixties and seventies was generally regarded as superior in Western countries.⁸⁰ Finally, some immigrants who had secure employment in India and Pakistan simply desired the excitement of opportunity that migration to the U.S. might offer them.⁸¹

South Asians who migrated to the U.S. in late 1960s and 1970s had been accustomed to using education as a strategy for upward mobility. Whether for themselves or their children, educational attainment presented an accessible means to both greater economic capital and cultural capital—i.e. a higher standard of living and higher social status. Future emigrants structured their own life choices by heavy investment in higher education through pursuance of advanced degrees in their home countries and looking toward additional degrees in western institutions. After migration and the commitment to permanent settlement in the United States, education continued to function as the most useful tool in achieving economic success and some measure of social acceptance. By comparison, in both the U.K. and the Indian subcontinent, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, education was rarely a means to employment. The function of education as the major determinant of upward mobility for immigrants is a historically produced phenomenon, dependent on the rise of a knowledge- and technology-based economy.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Z.A., interview; A.K., interview by author, 2 August 2007 (MDA).

After migration, South Asians continued to formulate patterns for success based on facets of education. They completed advanced degrees and made housing purchases factoring in educational quality as a key consideration. They strove to ensure that, like themselves, their children would have fundamental educational advantages and learn to define success as linked to education. It is the children of these immigrants who manage to secure the highest class ranks at high schools across the nation. It is not *all* Asian Americans who invest heavily in education and thus achieve high educational attainment; rather it is those who have the means to strategize, as shown in the following section.

Almost invariably, South Asian immigrants cited “good schools” for their young children as a principal reason for where they chose to live. As Indian immigrant A.S.A. emphatically stated, school quality was of such central importance that if the neighborhood school “was bad we would have moved right then. Because, I mean there’s no way I would have asked them to go to that school. Either we would have stayed there and [sent them] to private school or we would have moved out.”⁸² Interviewees spoke repeatedly of “good” and “bad” schools and neighborhoods. Their explanations of the meanings assigned to these simple labels reveal complex ideas on race, class, and identity. Seemingly straightforward decisions regarding schools existed within societal discourses at the time.

Decisions assessing school quality occurred, and continue to occur, within racial and class frameworks that utilized social, cultural, and symbolic capital. I quote one, very honest interviewee:

⁸² A.S.A., interview, 31-2.

“We moved to Katy in ’73... The school district was top. Now, Katy School District also has Katy [High School], right? But Katy High School’s score and education is not that high and like us [at Taylor High School]. Nobody liked to put our children in that school because it was all Mexican and black population, right?”⁸³

Few other interviewees were so forthcoming, at times making it challenging to tease out racial ideas. For some, the only information they would share on this issue was when speaking about affirmative action. Taken comprehensively, however, most immigrants who I interviewed followed the above statement if not in word, then certainly in deed. By combining evidence from interviews with the enrollment data for the schools in question, I show that although South Asian immigrants made the same choices many other parents did (and if given the option, the choice that many white, black, Latino, and Asian parents would make for their children), that for all their normativity, these choices were no less embedded in racial discourses. Race was (and remains) at the heart of decisions regarding children’s schooling, and an exploration of the role of education for immigrants reveals what dominant members of society thought about marginalized, racialized groups of people in their midst. In the passage above, R.P. alluded to the school district’s high ranking, as did all other interviewees. In elaborating upon what she specifically meant by “top” district, she noted that “scores” and “education” were of paramount importance. The low scores and poor quality of education at the other high school were embodied in its students—“Mexican and black” students. R.P. arrived in Houston in 1970. By the time

⁸³ R.P., interview with author, 15 November 2011 (SAADA).

her children were ready to attend high school in the mid-1980s, she had internalized the prevailing language and ideology of race in white, middle-class suburbs as it pertained to school choice.

Immigrants learned about which schools were top-performing through some of the same word-of-mouth networks that informed them about “good” neighborhoods. Their co-workers provided them with information but so did other friends, who, in turn, had learned from friends and co-workers. This type of social capital—access to networks of information—aided access to quality neighborhood and schools. Realtors, though prohibited from explicitly “steering” buyers to any specific neighborhood by sharing information about demographics or crime rates, could inform buyers generally that a particular area was in a strong school district.⁸⁴ Some realtors may likely have over-shared important neighborhood information in their zeal to sell houses. Regardless, though, most houses in Alief (to where numerous South Asians moved) were brand new and so may have been purchased directly from the builders. K.S. lived briefly in Spring Branch, having heard from “so many friends” that the Spring Branch “School District was very good...[Because our] kids were going to school, we were first looking at school districts.”⁸⁵

Even after their children had outgrown local schools, school quality continued to demand parents’ attention. Whether because school quality correlated to house value or because it was used to gauge broader issues of neighborhood safety, parents kept themselves apprised of the health of their local high schools in particular. K.S. recalled

⁸⁴ S.B., interview.

⁸⁵ K.S., interview, 14.

that she had heard about changes in area high schools especially after Hurricane Katrina. K.S. said, “there is so much fighting each other, there is so much crimes going on. That I heard, but I didn’t have that kind of experience.”⁸⁶ Though her children were now adults, she had “heard about so many crimes there. So much drug problem is going on”— problems that did not exist on such a large scale two decades ago when her children were in school.⁸⁷ South Asian immigrant parents chose schools for their children that were majority-white. After their children had graduated from high school, these parents nevertheless remained connected to school developments, especially as they pertained to the behavior and performance of racialized groups. It is worth noting that starting in the late 1980s, Alief schools experienced a dramatic decrease in students from middle-income families, a rise in minority students and, likely, a decrease in academic accolades. The evacuation of residents from New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina occurred in 2005, yet in K.S.’s memory, the drop in school quality is linked to the influx of evacuees. I have found that in interviews and through participant observation, South Asian immigrants link neighborhood changes such as school deterioration and high crime rates to the relocation of mostly African American residents from New Orleans to Houston. Long after residents had any tangible link to area schools, schools continued to serve as barometers for neighborhood health. For homeowners, schools always matter.

In addition to tapping into information networks, some immigrants said that they tracked school-related information in the newspaper. As S.B. recalled: “Once a year in the newspaper... they mention about schools. They mention how many were National

⁸⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 38-9.

Honor students.”⁸⁸ When asked about how he knew which school districts were good, A.S.A. stated that he “read about it” in the newspaper.⁸⁹ Similarly, married couple S.K. and V.K. responded, “it’s what you read in the paper.”⁹⁰ Even realtors relied on newspapers and word-of-mouth networks to inform their buyers about school quality. S.B., an engineer-turned-realtor, argued that as long as the information was “open record” and a real estate “agent was knowledgeable” about general matters, he was free to share the information with clients.⁹¹ It is also likely that *after* parents move to a neighborhood, they pay particular attention to local school achievements in order to validate their school and neighborhood choices.

Parents with the material means choose to provide their children with the “best” education they can afford. It is therefore unsurprising that educated, professionally qualified South Asian immigrants uniformly structured their residential choices around school quality. What is interesting, however, is what they meant when, like Indian immigrant A.S.A., they stated that “Alief school district was at top at that time.”⁹² South Asian immigrants defined good schools as ones whose students scored well on standardized tests, had students that valued education, hired well-qualified teachers, and provided their children with a challenging curriculum. They also expected good schools to be attended by students as similarly studious as their own, who came from intact, stable families, provided academic rigor for their children through AP classes, and

⁸⁸ S.B., interview.

⁸⁹ A.S.A., interview. 29-30.

⁹⁰ S.K. and V.K., interview, 18-19.

⁹¹ S.B., interview.

⁹² A.S.A., interview, 27.

offered a safe, relatively drug- and violence-free environment. These are the same reasons that many parents of any race or ethnicity still cite when selecting a school. In addition, they identified good schools by their racial composition. A.S.A. explained, the “Alief area was full of Indians and Chinese because everybody wanted their kids to go to the good school district.” Both Alief and Spring Branch, according to A.S.A., fared much better than the city of Houston’s school district (HISD) that by the 1980s, “was going down.”⁹³ Indeed, HISD superintendent Billy Reagan affirmed that test scores for the district had declined precipitously since 1970.⁹⁴ By 1976 elementary school children in two-thirds of HISD schools failed to show expected academic growth. A study administered by HISD found a “direct correlation between the number of students receiving free lunches and achievement.”⁹⁵

I do not argue that the interviewees were incorrect in their assessments regarding the increase of drug use and violence at their children’s schools. It is true that test scores did fall. Neighborhood house values plummeted and low-income families replaced middle-income families. The immigrants were entirely correct in their understanding of these facts. In this chapter, I attempt to disentangle the assumptions embedded in immigrant explanations of local developments. After the forced desegregation of schools in the greater Houston area beginning in 1960 but in earnest after 1970, white Southerners and newcomers engaged in discourses that entangled categories of class and race with a range of negative behaviors so that ultimately it became difficult to

⁹³ A.S.A., interview, 29-30.

⁹⁴ Jim Craig, “Most city grade schools fail in academic study,” *Houston Post*, 9 March 1976, pg. 1A.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

distinguish between the various components.⁹⁶ Like white Americans, South Asian immigrants collapsed features of poverty, oppression, and race so that “blackness” generally equated with “poor” and “criminal.” As S.K. explained, the only way to discern between good and bad schools was to see if “all the kids were from a good family, [if] they are coming to school, their habits, and everything. So that’s how you say it’s a good school.”⁹⁷ When pressed to clarify what she meant by “good” schools, V.K. said that they sought educational excellence in the form of AP classes, for example. Her husband S.K. interjected, saying that the price-point of a neighborhood affected the quality of residents. Because theirs was a more expensive area, the residents were not “poor”—not “black” nor “Mexican”—and *that* is what made area schools “good.”⁹⁸ Much of the discussion involves the decline of Alief area schools.

In “bad” schools, S.K. pointed out, students’ parents frequently changed out partners, were “rough,” uneducated, drunkards, and had low character.⁹⁹ Consequently, their children “dropped out” of school, left home, and joined gangs at a young age.¹⁰⁰ S.K. noted that these behaviors occurred among the “lower” class.”¹⁰¹ In transitioning from a “good” to “bad” school, the first indication to parents was that “first of all, the discipline became bad,” meaning that there was an escalation in disciplinary

⁹⁶ Willam Henry Kellar, *Make Haste Slowly: Moderates, Conservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

⁹⁷ S.K. and V.K., interview, 19

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

infractions.¹⁰² A.S.A. recounted the story of his college-aged daughter who had recently visited her former high school teacher. The teacher discouraged her former student from visiting the school, instead meeting at a restaurant. The Alief high school she had once attended had installed metal detectors to curb the presence of knives and guns in school. Fights and drug use had escalated among the student body. Still disturbed by memory of that incident, A.S.A. said, “Just like that, it went from a top school to the bottom school. It’s really very different. I mean there are still some good, smart students. I’m not saying that every student is bad, that’s not what I’m saying, but as a group, it became...the emphasis was not on schooling and learning and all that stuff.”¹⁰³ K.S. noted that although Alief schools used to be “very good,” as she understood it, students in more recent years were heavily involved in “drugs and crimes and all these things.”¹⁰⁴ Her main concerns were related to disciplinary infractions—understandably in providing a safe environment for children.¹⁰⁵

Alief, once considered “hot” real estate, had transitioned to “less desirable,” at least for middle-income buyers. The transition affected perceptions of school quality. When Pakistani immigrant S.B., a realtor, was asked about the current value of Alief as a buyers’ market, he responded, “No, it’s not a hot area.”¹⁰⁶ The difference between a desirable area and an attractive one, according to S.B., hinged on race and ethnicity. Whereas during the 1980s “more whites” lived in Alief, by the 1990s it had “become

¹⁰² A.S.A., interview.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ K.S., interview, 14.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰⁶ S.B., interview, 24-28.

more [of a] mixed community. I see a lot of Chinese, Spanish, blacks, and whites.” He added that in the eighties, the “Mexican population was not so much as it is now.” After the 1990s, he continued, the “percentage of whites may have gone down but otherwise, other communities are all there.” Though neighborhood house values are often affected by factors such as location and average house quality, for many Americans the perception of decreased value was aligned with the number of whites living there. Using realtor-speak, S.B. termed Alief in the early 1990s an area “in transition,” and “when an established neighborhood changes into transition, there is always crime.” He then related an incident in which his son’s bike was vandalized and stolen at his Alief middle school. Soon thereafter, S.B. and his wife decided to move to Sugar Land. Though S.B. neglected to specify who was committing the crimes, observing instead that “no, this is hard to say,” in the span of his discussions, he had already inadvertently linked shifting demographics to crime rate to school quality.

One of the key characteristics assigned to blackness by both South Asian Americans and other Americans was a decided lack of commitment to education. A.S.A. suggested that African Americans “as a rule, they don’t view education with as much importance as Asians do, whether it’s Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese....They [African Americans] just want athletics and entertainment.”¹⁰⁷ A.S.A. knew that not *all* African Americans ascribed to these aspirations. As he said (haltingly, as is often the case when interviewees attempt to speak about race), “they still are—there are some—and I have—one of my colleagues is African [American] and he’s a very smart kid and his kids are

¹⁰⁷ A.S.A., interview.

very smart, so that's not the point."¹⁰⁸ His point was that as a group, the majority of African Americans were not invested in education though he knew that there were some exceptional individuals. Similarly, P.D., who moved from Bombay to Houston in 1974, dated a white, Jewish American in his early years in the U.S.¹⁰⁹ In the interview he had already referenced the general disapproval among South Asian immigrants of intermarriage with African Americans. When asked why his white girlfriend was preferable to other racialized groups such as African Americans, he immediately answered "intelligence...academic intelligence."¹¹⁰ Throughout the interview, P.D. was very articulate and spoke with clarity and insight about South Asian perceptions. He was upfront about "all kinds of stereotyping that goes on" with regards to African Americans and even expressed a degree of indignation that this was the case.¹¹¹ In spite of having moral reservations about racialization, P.D. could not fully extricate himself from it, as shown in his response to the question regarding his former girlfriend. This paradox—the intersection of being implicated in a racial system as an economically privileged member but also as an outsider who in varying degrees sympathizes with other persons of color—characterizes the position of many South Asian immigrants.

Summing up the key reasons for what he saw as African Americans' failure to demonstrate a life-long commitment to education, Indian immigrant U.M. explained that:

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ P.D., 45.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 45, 21-22.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 21.

Those problems that we hear people talk about, politicians talk about that....Right from the start, their focus on education has not been there in the families and this needs to happen right from when you are growing up. African American families, I also noticed a lot of times they would be single parent families and so from a...right from the family structure it seemed like, that there was not much of a focus on education. And hence, for that reason, you wouldn't...we didn't see any African Americans in the graduate student community.”¹¹²

U.M. reveals that his racial ideas were learned (from “people” and politicians) rather than inherent. He links blackness with broken families with educational failure, echoing professor Lino Graglia’s comments regarding “cultural effects” of African American-ness on poor success in school. Graglia, in a position of intellectual authority, ostensibly represents the “people” to whom U.M. refers, from whom the American public learn their racial ideologies.

By comparison, immigrants described the middle class as “better involved” in their children’s education, giving them “good training,” and residing in “good” neighborhoods. These actions resulted in having “good” kids who made schools “good.”¹¹³ In the 1980s the majority of students at Alief’s Elsik High School, by S.K. and V.K.’s accounting, were white with some Indians and Chinese.¹¹⁴ Though S.K. and V.K. construed problems as occurring among African Americans, they were extremely

¹¹² U.M., interview by author, 5 October 2011 (MDA), 22.

¹¹³ S.K. and V.K., interview, 18-19. Unfortunately, these figures are not available.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

cognizant of the class aspect of their analysis. More problems “happen[ed] in [the] lower income group,” whose “lifestyle is different, atmosphere is different,” and among whom “gangsters” dominate.¹¹⁵ S.K. continued, if you are among the class of people who works, then you are “family people,” and you don’t [experience] any bad things.”¹¹⁶ There is a tension between S.K. and V.K.’s assigning blame to race or to class; on one hand, they acknowledge that class disadvantages exacerbate aberrant behaviors, but on the other, they imagine that these problems are closely intertwined with blackness. A.S.A. explained how the Alief school district changed for the worst: “Before...the kids’ parents were college-educated people so naturally, they expected their kids to do well in school. Now all of the sudden you’ve got the people who are either high school [graduates] or high school drop-outs so even though they may” voice a commitment to their children’s education, they “were not able to enforce” this commitment. Their “kids would say, ‘well, you didn’t go to college.’”¹¹⁷ In particular, it was the middle class—with South Asian immigrants being emblematic of this group—that prioritized education because their “family concept was different, kids were different. They concentrated on studies. They were not drop outs or anything.”¹¹⁸

Others used the perception of a “gang problem” in public schools in general as justification to enroll their children in elite private schools, buying the perceived protection that only a middle or higher income can afford.¹¹⁹ When P.D. moved to a

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ S.K. and V.K., interview, 59.

¹¹⁷ A.S.A., interview, 31-2.

¹¹⁸ S.K. and V.K., interview, 18.

¹¹⁹ V.A.K., interview, 32.

racially diversifying neighborhood in Southwest Houston in the mid-1980s, he and his wife quickly decided that “the schools in that neighborhood were not very good.”¹²⁰ They enrolled their young daughter at St. Thomas Episcopal, an elite, parochial, private school, bypassing the public schools that served a growing African American population. Their daughter remained at St. Thomas through eighth grade. Meanwhile, her family had moved to Sugar Land, and for ninth grade they were willing to consider Kempner High School, a public school in Sugar Land. Their daughter found that she enjoyed her first day there and her parents withdrew her enrollment at St. Thomas. This class dichotomy emerges in discourses around public versus private schools but also when comparing urban to suburban schools. K.S.’s husband worked in downtown Houston, located in the center of the city, approximately twenty-four miles from her Alief-Mission Bend neighborhood. After they moved to Houston in 1976, they purchased a home in Alief because she observed that more and more of “our people were coming” to Alief and “everybody said that Alief School District is very good.”¹²¹ According to K.S., Houston suffered from overpopulation and crowding which affected school quality.¹²² Others also saw class as a salient force in urban to suburban migration. A.S.A. explained, “because those who were white collar workers they were moving to Sugar Land or Katy. So that’s what happened is all the white collar workers were moving where the school districts

¹²⁰ P.D., interview, 25.

¹²¹ K.S., interview, 17-18.

¹²² Ibid., 37.

were good so they were going to Katy or Sugar Land on this side, or Clearlake or wherever it was.”¹²³

South Asian immigrants perceived all non-Asians as academically inferior. For example, for “European Americans...even 30 years ago, education was not as dominant as it was in Asian communities and it is still not there...”¹²⁴ Nevertheless, European Americans have exhibited greater educational focus, according to most South Asian immigrants, than “Africans or Hispanics.”¹²⁵ As a point of pride, S.K. noted that Asians, though the children of foreigners, have comprised the “top layer, academically” in schools. He continued, “so our students—outsiders—Indians and Chinese, they are continuing first, top. The Hispanic and other people, they are considered average.” He considered Indians and Chinese as academically on par with each other. Simply put, “Asians especially” were “doing better” than others.¹²⁶

In trying to rationalize why the African Americans in their narratives de-prioritize education, some have alluded to class imperatives as shown above. Others have said African American youth were unusually attracted to the status and fame of professional athletics and entertainment. A.S.A. stated that when comparing educational attainment and the performance industries, young African Americans would say, ““well, he’s a Ph.D. and he has written ten books...so what?”” whereas, if “he’s an NBA player or he’s a golfer or whatever, he’s on the screen, and everybody is running around [him]. It’s the glamour of Beyoncé, you know, she’s singing and dancing. Just everybody looks at

¹²³ A.S.A., interview, 31.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 51

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ S.K. and V.K., interview, 18-19.

her.”¹²⁷ Ultimately, though A.S.A. believed that African Americans have as much natural “ability” to succeed in school, he offered that without a high regard for educational attainment, “the majority of them they just don’t want to put the effort into it.”¹²⁸

Others, though fewer in number, linked the perceived weak educational values among African Americans to financial hardships. K.S. said that African Americans “are also very good, but I don’t know, they are not giving that much time to kids, it looks like.” Because “they have so much hardship,” in terms of working “minimum pay” jobs and they have to “work more,” K.S. continued, they were unable to devote time to instill educational values in their children. Thus, K.S. suggested that each generation was “very hard working” but without using education as a ladder out of poverty; and also, because “they have more kids,” they perpetuate the cycle of low educational attainment. She argued that, unlike African Americans who “don’t put limits” on the number of children they have, Indian immigrants’ choice to have smaller families contributes to their ability to teach their children the priority of academic excellence.¹²⁹ Conversely, K.S. was the only interviewee to reason that many South Asian immigrants had the implicit advantage of growing up in educated families who could *afford* to provide them not only with material comforts and greater hands-on parenting time but to teach them about the value of educational focus. Though she did not provide details, K.S. hinted at a “time” when African Americans were separated (segregated?) from others and struggled to “mingle”

¹²⁷ A.S.A., interview, 52.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ K.S., interview, 46-7.

with outsiders, so that “they were also afraid from other people about ‘how do we mix’ [with them]. That was also hard for them.”¹³⁰

As echoed by other interviewees, K.S. pointed out that, in terms of educational accomplishments such as high school class ranking and test scores, “Our people are first.” This was possible because South Asian immigrants “are taking care of education” by “giv[ing] more time to kids for education.” Simply put, for K.S., South Asians valued education in ways that other ethno-racial groups did not.¹³¹ In addition, they prioritized child-rearing and familism above other values. She stated, we were “more family oriented” and “gave more time to [our] kids. [We spend more time] talking with the kids” about school, classes, their friends, teachers. In addition, South Asian immigrant parents actively participated in school life by getting to know their children’s teachers and going to their children’s school “every week or two.” They wanted to “help [their] kids do something better.”¹³² Other children, by K.S.’s assessment, grew up “differently.” Their “parents were very busy and they didn’t take care of their kids. That was also a big problem because most of these kids were staying home and they were watching TV and all these things. They didn’t get enough education and enough love in their house.”¹³³ K.S. equated the provision of educational resources as an expression—an important expression—of love. S.K. clarified that for African Americans specifically, rather than invest efforts in education and achieve material success that way, they risk lesser odds of success through athletics and singing: “With athletics and all of that all you get is one

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 39.

¹³³ Ibid.

busted knee your athleticism is over. I mean not every singer gets a chance to be in the right recording system. But that they don't realize." He concluded that they "have a big, big problem."¹³⁴

Once Alief schools had declined in quality by South Asian immigrant standards, many Indian and Pakistani families moved to Sugar Land, an affluent, majority-white incorporated suburb of Houston. "There's one reason why Sugar Land has" so many *desis*, asserted P.A.: "schools." Sugar Land has a "good education system. Fort Bend ISD, Clements, Dulles, all the high schools. That's it. Nobody cares [about] anything else. It's education." For P.A., good schools were defined as those that had "good students, good peers." South Asian immigrants sought schools with students who had like-minded parents, or as he put it, "professional" parents—parents who had achieved material success largely through the attainment of higher education and reinforced the same expectations for their children. It was a "combination" of this professionalism and academically strong peers that contributed to an "overall environmental psyche, so to speak." He concluded that "that's why there are so many" South Asians in Sugar Land.¹³⁵ Asked where he would advise newcomers to Houston to move, he responded, "Honestly, I will advise them: Sugar Land." His first reason was that they had "good schools," after which he noted that they also have a strong police department, newer homes, and convenient location relative to Houston.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ S.K. and V.K., interview, 51.

¹³⁵ P.A., interview, 67-8.

¹³⁶ S.B., interview, 37. Sugar Land is located roughly 10 miles from the city of Houston's southwest boundary.

Immigrants weigh several factors before determining that education is their own best opportunity for success as they define it. They consider the risk of failure in each potential pathway to success and the level of acculturation necessary in order to achieve success. In this formulation, education offers the most reliable option. Other options, while available, are much riskier and/or require more cultural fluency than many new immigrants possess. For example, unlike previously settled Americans who can use established social networks and familiarity with the cultural language to drum up business in new entrepreneurial endeavors, newer immigrants have neither those social networks nor familiarity. Their businesses tend toward the ethnic economy in some measure (either through their employee base, resource base, or client base). Though there are many exceptions to this—for example in Houston, an Indian-immigrant owned company that manufactures pipes; a Pakistani-immigrant who runs a restaurant empire; an Indian-immigrant-owned company that builds industrial computers; a Pakistani-immigrant owned beauty salon that is serviced by and caters entirely to non-co-ethnics—these aforementioned businesses were all established by immigrants who arrived in the U.S. before 1980. Later immigrants from South Asia, especially those who entered the U.S. on family preference visas, often opted for non-education based careers such as taxi-driving in New York or motel businesses in the southwestern U.S.¹³⁷ For the group under study in this project, educational investment and attainment were already established prior to migration and provided a reliable outcome.

As mentioned earlier, South Asian immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s entered the US on “special preference visas for professionals in fields of shortage” or as university

¹³⁷ See Vivek Bald; Pawan Dhingra.

students from the B.A. to Ph.D. level. Their immigration stream was highly selective, allowing only the highly educated to settle in the US. As parents, they valued education as much for their children as for themselves, and in a rapidly changing economy, one that relied on service and information-based skills, education provided the capital and means to social and economic mobility. South Asian immigrants used their social networks of co-ethnics, professional co-workers, and real estate agents to determine which schools and school districts were best and those that were majority- white. Within their South Asian immigrant networks, high-percentage-black-schools were not under consideration. Indian and Pakistani parents associated high-percentage-black schools with “bad” schools, those perceived to have had discipline problems, a weak learning environment, and “black culture.” In their perception, those schools could not have met their requirements. At a time when schools were in the process of desegregating, whites fled to the suburbs in search of “good” schools. From the 1970s onwards, South Asians did the same.

Recent sociological research shows that for white Americans, higher levels of parental education positively correspond with sending one’s children to high-percentage-white schools.¹³⁸ Commensurate with their level of education, the more highly educated white parents opt either to move to whiter neighborhoods with white-majority public schools or privatize their children’s schooling through private institutions or homeschooling. Highly educated blacks, on the other hand, choose schools that are diverse, with high academic standards, and usually with a clear black majority.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ David Sikkink and Michael O. Emerson, “School Choice and Racial Segregation in US Schools: The Role of Parents’ Education,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 2 (2008): 267–293.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Because the highly educated (regardless of racial background) already place a stronger emphasis on education, they utilize education as a means to attain higher status but also as a status marker in and of itself. That is, education is cultural capital in two ways: it is both a vehicle for socio-economic mobility and a claim to high status already. By enrolling children in majority white schools, parents aid them in maintaining class privilege based on perceived superiority in education. Creating distance from black students ensures that their children's status will remain "unpolluted."¹⁴⁰ South Asian immigrants may articulate ideals of compassion and charity, as André Béteille states, "yet their own actions contribute in myriad ways to the perpetuation of inequality."¹⁴¹ While Béteille writes exclusively of elite Indians, higher education, and minority access in contemporary India, his observation is abundantly applicable to South Asians immigrants (and indeed, many other middle-class and affluent Americans) in the U.S.

As a group, by the mid-1980s, South Asians immigrants had the highest level of education of any Asian immigrant group in the U.S.¹⁴² While 36 percent of South Asian immigrants held a doctorate, by comparison, only 6.7 percent of white Americans, 13.9 percent of Chinese immigrants, and 13.1 percent of Korean immigrants had Ph.D.s. Indeed, 80 percent of South Asian immigrants had a college degree versus 35 percent of whites, 45 percent of Chinese immigrants, and 64 percent of Korean immigrants who were college educated.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 273.

¹⁴¹ Béteille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 2.

¹⁴² Grace Kao, "Asian Americans as Model Minorities" *American Journal of Education* 103 (February 1995).

An abundance of evidence supports the hypothesis that parental expectations, aspirations, level of education, and awareness of workplace discrimination all serve to reinforce high student achievement among Asian Americans. Asian American students earn higher grades than other ethno-racial groups with similar socio-economic backgrounds. These grades are not the result of higher ability levels (white students performed as well as or better than Asian Americans on reading tests, though slightly lower on math tests) but on the emphasis placed on education.¹⁴³ Studies have corroborated that Asian Americans, though better educated than whites, receive negative compensation in income relative to whites.¹⁴⁴ With an awareness of glass ceilings that exist for them and their children, Asian immigrant parents greatly value educational achievement to offset potential discrimination. Furthermore, much as they chose for themselves, they channel their children into “safe” careers that will yield stable incomes, minimizing the risks of discrimination yet again.¹⁴⁵ These tendencies in combination with a higher than average level of education among South Asian immigrants account for large numbers of high-achieving South Asian Americans.¹⁴⁶ I present this data to highlight the role of education among Asian immigrants in general, but more specifically among Indian and Pakistani immigrants.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Herbert R. Barringer, David T. Takeuchi and Peter Xenos, “Education, Occupational Prestige, and Income of Asian Americans,” *Sociology of Education*, 63, No. 1 (Jan., 1990), pp. 27-43.

¹⁴⁵ Kao, “Asian Americans as Model Minorities,” 150-2.

¹⁴⁶ Southeast Asians, though socioeconomically and educationally disadvantaged, nevertheless perform exceedingly well in school. I have not found a study to date that examines whether South Asian Americans have higher grades than Southeast Asian Americans (a label which aggregates distinct sub-groupings).

The trope of the *model minority* circulates broadly in dominant American media and discourse. As Asian Americans are complicit in the circulation of Orientalist notions of themselves, so too do they participate in reinforcing the model minority myth.¹⁴⁷ For example, when S.K. spoke earlier of racial group performance in schools, he said, “Chinese and Indians, we have same numbers, they are the top layer academically. So our students—outsiders—Indians and Chinese, they are continuing first, top. The Hispanic and other people, they are considered average.”¹⁴⁸ S.K.’s use of the term “outsider” reveals his estimation of himself as well as his Asian American children, as immigrants. Though Asian American children have grown up in the United States and generally identify strongly as Americans (even as they may identify with their parents’ homeland), S.K. nevertheless perceives a difference. From his perspective, not only are immigrants outsiders, their children are also outsiders, betraying perhaps the notion of Asian Americans as “forever foreigners” though they may adopt local forms of dress, speech, mannerisms, and ideologies. Though S.K. found this “outsider status” problematic, like other Asian immigrants he expressed pride in the educational accomplishments of Asian American youth, precisely *because* of their outsider status; they had excelled in a system that was not their own.

Based on their and their children’s educational accomplishments, South Asian immigrants note that these opportunities are available to everyone equally; and if some fail to take advantage of opportunities placed before them, they can only hold themselves responsible. If they perform poorly in school, have lower than average college admissions

¹⁴⁷ *Hindutva*, for example, provides a timeless, unchanging Hinduism. See Conclusion.

¹⁴⁸ S.K. and V.K., interview, 20.

rates, and have lower income levels than others, they have not valued education and career attainment. However, empirical studies exploring school aspirations and performance between ethno-racial groups contradict this logic. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey have shown that in terms of positive attitudes about school, assessing the value of education as necessary for career success, and maintaining optimism regarding one's own success, African Americans and Asian Americans share similarly positive outlooks.¹⁴⁹ They write that these two groups “consistently report more pro-school attitudes than do white students.”¹⁵⁰ The authors emphasize that although positive attitudes are crucial for school success, many African Americans continue to perform relatively poorly in school. Though they clearly value education, as a group, they face material conditions unlike other groups in the U.S. Without the “material conditions that foster the development of skills, habits, and styles”—cultural skills or capital—they face massive hurdles to success.¹⁵¹ Specifically, until American society directly engages with the rise of residential and school segregation and income inequality, success for underprivileged, racialized groups will continue to be elusive. As Orfield and Lee insist, “it is unrealistic to expect to change schools in any deep way without dealing with some of the issues that arise with poverty.”¹⁵² And because residential areas and schools have become increasingly segregated and have concentrated poverty, poor educational

¹⁴⁹ James W. Ainsworth-Darnell and Douglas B. Downey, “Assessing the Oppositional Culture Explanation for Racial/Ethnic Differences in School Performance,” *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 4 (August 1998): 541-2.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 542.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 551.

¹⁵² Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee, “Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality” (Cambridge: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, January 2005), 6 based on arguments by Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2004).

performance as a symptom of this poverty continues to socially reproduce economic deprivation. Meanwhile, the concentration of white students (both low income and middle-class) in white-majority schools continues.¹⁵³

Despite growing disparities of income and opportunity, and their correlation to race, stereotypes about poor work ethic and minority races proliferate. A.S.A. summed up the views of many Americans when he stated that affirmative action (i.e. the designation of quotas in education and employment for historically disadvantaged groups) was now largely obsolete:

It cannot be forever. I mean, you know, like it was for African Americans. They are even given chances for a particular school or a particular profession and I think those... that time is gone. I don't think they need that anymore. They still need it in the private businesses. I mean, affirmative action for union contracts and so on. I think that is still needed for another 30 years, 20 years. But in education and just the regular jobs and all, that I don't think we need anymore. Their time is passed.¹⁵⁴

Though A.S.A. recognizes the presence of discrimination, he expresses a hesitation in openly supporting affirmative action. It is required, he observes, in only some employment situations. South Asian immigrant perceptions dictate that attainment of the

¹⁵³ Orfield and Lee, "Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality," 15. 90 percent of the nation's white students attend schools that are at least half white. Of these, nearly fifty percent attend schools that are 90 to 100 percent white.

¹⁵⁴ A.S.A., interview, 57.

American Dream faces no significant racial barriers and thus, requires no quotas for equal opportunities.

There is a consensus among South Asian immigrants that their higher than average levels of education have secured a comfortable lifestyle, “not rich but comfortable.”¹⁵⁵ They know that the early generation of post-1965 immigrants came largely as students, chose to remain at least for the short term, endured their “struggling time,” and emerged, if not “very well-off, they are [nevertheless] O.K.”¹⁵⁶ What remains unseen or unacknowledged in these immigrant narratives is that even as new immigrants, South Asians brought with them the advantages of selective immigration legislation and the legacies of a colonial past—that is, initiation into a capitalist economy supported by a middle-class value system—that facilitated their rise to success in the United States. They fail to notice that most of them hailed from middle- or upper-class backgrounds and thus had a high degree of cultural capital including educational attainment. Indeed, although admissions to high quality schools and universities in South Asia was “in principal open to members of all classes and communities, both teachers and students came largely from the upper castes and middle classes.”¹⁵⁷ Activists in India recognize that till today, the best quality educational institutions—those from which South Asian immigrants to the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s often graduated—were and are “elitist.” They hailed from

¹⁵⁵ Z.A., interview, 25.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 18, 25.

¹⁵⁷ Bétéille, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 5. Major reforms were undertaken after 1977 so that universities worked toward greater inclusiveness.

middle-class backgrounds and were a product of this system of private education.¹⁵⁸

Whether in regards to college admissions in South Asia or the U.S., individual ability alone does not enable access or facilitate social mobility. If the possession of material, cultural, and social capital are integral to educational attainment in India and Pakistan, they are likewise a boon in entering highly skilled immigration streams and in aiding success in host countries. Those whom immigrants indicate are failing to avail themselves of openly accessible opportunities have historically lacked such advantages. Immigrants also overlook the reality that when they entered the U.S. as students, though they had little material wealth, they possessed another form of capital and a major tool for advancement: higher education. South Asian immigrants begin their “rags to riches” narrative after they set foot on American soil. By moving the chronology back before migration, even by one or two generations, it becomes evident that though immigrants from India and Pakistan imagine themselves as arriving with little or no economic capital and achieving subsequent success by their hard work alone, their possession of multiple forms of capital prior to migration were crucial in their later accumulation of wealth and status.

¹⁵⁸ The discussion of affirmative action is not unfamiliar to Indian immigrants, as debates on the reservation of university seats for “Backward Castes” continue in India. See André Bételle, *Universities at the Crossroads*, 56-60.

Chapter Four

Moving to Whiter Pastures

In 1968, frustrated with a meager income pieced together from work as an agricultural engineer and his side business of poultry farming, S.B. left Karachi, Pakistan, to study at the University of Houston. Like most other Indian and Pakistani students at UH in the late 1960s and '70s, S.B. shared a humble apartment with other South Asian students in a predominantly African American neighborhood adjacent to the university. Building on his associate's degree in engineering, S.B. completed his B.A. in 1970, stopping midpoint to return to Pakistan and marry. He and his young wife moved into apartments in central and later, southwest Houston, a rapidly developing area through the 1970s. They purchased their first home in the southwest suburb of Alief in 1978 until finally, in 1989, they settled in another of Houston's southwestern suburbs, Sugar Land.¹ M.S. also worked toward his B.A. in engineering at the University of Houston between

¹ S.B., interview by author, 25 July 2012 (South Asian American Digital Archive, under processing) [SAADA].

1966 and 1969. He lived in a shared apartment near campus for less than a year until his wife joined him from Karachi. Their subsequent apartments in the museum district and Greenway Plaza were centrally located in strong commercial districts removed from the inner city.² By the time their children were ready for elementary school, they had decided to purchase a home in northwest Houston's suburbs in the affluent Spring Branch area, and have lived there since 1977.³

Where we choose to live, when we have the luxury of choice, is fundamentally influenced by the cost of residence whether by mortgage or rent and/or proximity to work, the presence of friends or family, and, if purchasing a home, the projected return on investment. Would-be residents also take into account more qualitative factors beyond the logistical. The neighborhood emerges as a discursive space that reflects our imagined selves, aspirations, and our understanding of social structure.⁴ This chapter analyzes immigrant residential choices by combining the insights offered through oral history interviews, census data and mapping on racial and class demographic shifts, and economic trends in the Houston metropolitan area. The utilization of these methodological tools reveals the importance of racial assumptions among the various determinants governing immigrant and other American residential patterns.

Typically, South Asian immigrants who moved to Houston between 1965 and 1980 followed clear settlement patterns. S.B. and M.S.'s spatial trajectories typify the

² Joe R. Feagin, *Free Enterprise City* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 197-199.

³ M.S., interview by author, 17 June 2007 (M.D. Anderson Library, Special Collections, University of Houston) [MDA].

⁴ *Discourse* can be defined as "ways of speaking about the world of social experience" so that in a *discursive space*, discourses are "ways of systematically organizing human experience of the social world in language and thereby constituting modes of knowledge." Andrew Edgar and Peter R. Sedgwick, *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 117.

pattern adopted by their generation of South Asian immigrants in Houston. If they entered the U.S. for the purpose of higher education (as so many did during this time period), they first lived in apartment residences in the predominantly African American neighborhoods adjacent to the University of Houston. Soon after obtaining B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. degrees, often in engineering, they married and moved to apartments or homes in a large area of southwest Houston, encompassing what is known today as the Greater Sharpstown District and Fondren Southwest. They then purchased first or second homes further southwest of Houston in suburban Alief or in northwest Houston's Spring Branch area. Those who opted to move to Alief often completed this migratory journey with a final move to affluent Sugar Land. Of course, not all South Asians followed this particular trajectory. Some remained in near-southwest Houston through the 1980s, though in areas that have maintained at least a nominal white majority. Others moved to additional incorporated areas outside of Houston, such as Pasadena, Clear Lake, and Missouri City. For the most part, however, the pattern of urban to suburban migration emerged as the dominant model for pre-1980, South Asian immigrants.

Kenneth T. Jackson offers a useful definition—one that this study borrows—of suburbia as “both a planning type and a state of mind based on imagery and symbolism.”⁵ In addition, suburbs characteristically share low rates of residential density, a preponderance of single-family homes, and high rates of homeownership.⁶ Jackson also emphasizes higher income levels for suburbanites than urbanites; however, in the last three decades, many suburbs have faced the same problems of decline with which many

⁵ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

central city residents struggle. This chapter follows the movement of immigrant Indians and Pakistanis as they populated the city and its environs, from their first residences in southwest Houston to present locations in suburban Sugar Land. It then analyzes the significance of these residential decisions and the meanings that immigrants ascribed to the “suburbs.” I do not imply that all or even most South Asian immigrants replicated these patterns, either in the Houston area or elsewhere. Nor does this chapter trace all South Asian movement throughout the metropolis. Rather, by focusing the study on a few areas of significant settlement, my research interrogates the actions of this group as a window into Houstonians’ views of race, the city, and its environs during the aftermath of *de jure* racial segregation. I demonstrate that South Asian immigrants whose neighborhoods underwent the greatest demographic change—that is, became increasingly occupied by African Americans—quickly relocated to “whiter pastures” in the suburbs, affirming the endurance of racial hierarchies in the post-Jim Crow South.

After initially learning of the University of Houston through American university catalogs, college faculty, and word-of-mouth networks, Indian and Pakistani students often chose UH as a result of its low tuition rates and comparatively generous graduate funding as compared to other public universities.⁷ The South Asian student migration to Houston witnessed a steady increase—one that has yet to ebb. Between 1960 and 1968, in any given year, fewer than 75 students from India and Pakistan lived and studied in Houston. Between 1969 and 1980, UH’s student body included between 130 and 300

⁷ P.D., interview by author, 26 August 2011 (MDA), 6; V.A.K., interview by author, 17 August 2011 (MDA), 3.

such students, annually.⁸ Very few students initially attended other Houston universities, though eventually, thousands of second-generation students of South Asian descent, as well as international students, would attend area universities, including Rice University, Houston Baptist University, Texas Southern University, and the University of Houston, which now bills itself as one of “the most ethnically diverse research universities in the nation.”⁹ From 40 to 70 percent of the majority-male, single, Indo-Pak student generation of the 1960s and 1970s majored or specialized in engineering at UH with the remaining students pursuing science and increasingly, business degrees toward the end of the twenty-year period.¹⁰ These students from the Subcontinent formed a close-knit group, taking the same classes, socializing together, and for the purposes of this study, living near campus together.¹¹

South Asian students shared inexpensive apartments within one or two miles of the university, in the surrounding neighborhoods of Third Ward and University Oaks. During the 1960s, they tended to live near the university, some in units so small that they are described as “cabins” by their student occupants.¹² By the 1970s, many lived at Cullen Field Apartments, Cougar Apartments, King Apartments, or other apartments in

⁸ *Annual Enrollment Reports*, Office of International Student Admissions, University of Houston (Houston, 1969-1980); *Directory of International Students*, International Student Office, University of Houston (Houston, 1969-1970; 1974-1975; 1977-1978).

⁹ University of Houston website, <http://www.uh.edu/about/u-h-glance>. Also, a handful of post-doctoral and graduate Indian students attended Rice University as early as 1963.

¹⁰ Uzma Quraishi, “Educationally Empowered: The Indian and Pakistani Student Community in Houston, Texas, 1960-1975” (M.A. Thesis, University of Houston, 2008), 59.

¹¹ M.S., interview by author, 17 June 2007 (MDA), 7.

¹² M.U.K., interview by author, 16 January 2007, 15.

the vicinity, dividing the cost of rent by living three or four to a unit.¹³ The preponderance of two-bedroom apartments in Cougar Field Apartments encouraged students to double up in each bedroom. P.D., a graduate engineering student who arrived in 1974, described the “huge” complex as “crowded,” “rat-infested,” “run-down,” and “not very well kept.”¹⁴ He recalled that this large complex was perhaps 70 to 80 percent student-occupied, and mostly by international students.¹⁵ Though some shared cars with other, more senior co-ethnics, many students walked or rode bicycles to the university, taking them through the greater Third Ward neighborhood.

Since the late nineteenth century but particularly following World War II, the Third Ward became home to some of the highest concentrations of African American families in Houston.¹⁶ By 1979, over 90 percent of the Third Ward’s population identified as African American, while roughly 6 percent were white and 2.5 percent were Mexican-American.¹⁷ The neighborhood underwent a demographic transformation between 1950 and 1970, losing many of its white residents while expanding to incorporate displaced residents from a rapidly shrinking Fourth Ward.¹⁸ By the late

¹³ “International Student Roster, Fall 1966” (International Student Office, University of Houston: 1966); “A Report on the International Student at the University of Houston” (Committee on International Student Problems, University of Houston: July 20, 1968), 52.

¹⁴ P.D., interview by author, 26 August 2011 (MDA), 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., 9-10.

¹⁶ Ezell Wilson, “Third Ward, Steeped in Tradition of Self-reliance and Achievement,” *Houston History* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 31; Robert D. Bullard, *Invisible Houston: The Black Experience in Boom and Bust* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 30.

¹⁷ Houston City Planning Department, *Third Ward Data Book* (Houston: July 1976; Jan 1979), 1.

¹⁸ Bullard, *Invisible Houston*, 24-5. The construction of Interstate 45 divided the Fourth Ward neighborhood, rendering the unstable neighborhood more susceptible to the expanding central business district on its border.

1970s, the Third Ward had become one of the most densely populated areas of the city.¹⁹ Third Ward replaced Fourth Ward (formerly known as Freedmen's Town) as "the hub of black social, cultural, and economic life in Houston."²⁰ The neighborhood was also home to Texas Southern University, established as Houston Colored Junior College in 1927.

The neighborhood and university provided South Asian students with their formative racial perceptions of African Americans. U.M., who lived off Wheeler Street, within two or three blocks of campus, "found that it was a very unique and different culture of its own."²¹ He immediately noticed a distinct African American "accent" and "phrasing," one that other South Asian immigrants have stated that they found difficult to understand.²² Indian and Pakistani students, many pursuing graduate degrees, might also have noticed that their neighbors did not attend the same university as they did. Only in 1962 did UH enroll its first African American students (though UH accepted women, Mexican Americans, and international students prior to this).²³ The number of African American students increased only gradually.²⁴ U.M., who was an engineering graduate

¹⁹ Houston City Planning Department, *Third Ward Data Book* (Houston: July 1976; Jan 1979), 1.

²⁰ Bullard, *Invisible Houston*, 30.

²¹ U.M., interview by author, 5 Oct 2011 (MDA), 19.

²² *Ibid.*; Participant observation.

²³ Andrew Joseph Pegoda, "The University of Houston and Texas Southern University: Perpetuating 'Separate but Equal' in the Face of Brown v. Board of Education," *Houston History*, 8, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 19; Amilcar Shabazz, *Advancing Democracy: African Americans and the Struggle for Access and Equity in Higher Education in Texas* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 206.

²⁴ In 2011, only ten percent of UH's student body was African American. <http://www.uh.edu/about/uhr-glance/facts-figures/index.php>. Figures are not available for the years 1962 to 1980.

student in the early 1970s, stated that “there was no African American graduate student in the chemical engineering program that I can recall at the time that I was there.”²⁵

Soon after his arrival in Houston, friends warned U.M. about the dangers of the neighborhood. Though they lived close enough to campus, friends let him know that students walking to the apartments had been robbed and assaulted. He observed that “the neighborhood around there was not very safe,” subtly foreshadowing an association between crime and African Americans that would only gain greater purchase with time.²⁶ P.M. began doctoral studies in engineering at UH in 1974. He briefly roomed with co-ethnics in nearby apartments before moving to the campus dormitory, and later, joined another friend in area apartments. Soon after arriving in Houston, he “started hearing some stories that were not very flattering” to African Americans, resulting in his having “a poor impression” of them. He heard the stories “from other students [and] from media.”²⁷ The stories generally linked African Americans with crime, the media being particularly “good at portraying crimes; they are very descriptive.”²⁸ For these reasons, most Indian and Pakistani students felt that they “didn’t have the opportunity to strike sort of a friendship with” African Americans either on or off campus.²⁹

²⁵ U.M., interview, 22. P.D., interview, 12. According to P.D., there were not many white American or Hispanic American engineering graduate students either. International students comprised the bulk of students. His own cohort, matriculating in 1974, entailed one student each from Mexico, Israel, Iran, Argentina, Chile, perhaps two from the US, and three from India.

²⁶ U.M., interview, 14.

²⁷ Ibid., interview.

²⁸ P.M., interview by author, 8 October 2011 (MDA), 15.

²⁹ U.M., interview, 20.

However, the attitude toward African Americans was not so one-sided, characterized only by fear and emotional distance. P.M., who found that, socially, white American students “were not very talkative to us,” also remarked on his relationship with an African American student. During mealtimes, P.M. noted, although white Americans would not join him, an undergraduate African American football player “used to come and sit with me at lunch, dinners.”³⁰ Through this friendship, P.M. realized the invalidity of the rumors he had heard about African Americans. As he phrased it, he finally “understood that five fingers are not equal anywhere.”³¹ Though U.M. did not cultivate friendships with African American students, he became aware of their history as a group, alerting him to possible injustice. In the neighborhood and in the places U.M. frequented, though he “did not see any direct evidence” of the recently dissolved Jim Crow statutes that had once separated the races, he “kept hearing about these things a lot.” It struck him that segregated public spaces were only in the *recent* past. He reflected, “this was the early seventies we’re talking about, and it was not too long before that, that there were things like separate water fountains and separate eating places and so on, for people who were not whites, even as late as in the sixties.”³² Furthermore, he noticed that in the neighborhood, police routinely stopped African Americans, whether for traffic violations or for other reasons he could not know. The police stops struck him as significant in light of recent allegations of racial profiling against the Houston Police Department.³³ It

³⁰ P.M., interview, 15.

³¹ Ibid.

³² U.M., interview.

³³ Dwight Watson, *Race and the Houston Police Department, 1930-1990: A Change Did Come*, 1st ed (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2005).

seemed to U.M. that African Americans were being stopped less for what they had done than for “who the person was.”³⁴

South Asians who came to Houston as college students in the 1960s and '70s regard these years as a crucial starting point in their immigrant narrative. However temporary, residence in these apartments alongside other individuals of humble origin corroborates for immigrants the trajectory of their personal American Dream narratives.³⁵ The majority of these foreign students left South Asia with very little money and, like their African American neighbors, struggled to live on meager means.³⁶ Their narratives of spatial mobility from multi-unit dwellings or small homes in the American inner city, to spacious suburban houses, illustrate to South Asian immigrants the possibilities available to all Americans who “work hard.” Residence among African Americans imbues them with a sense of shared experience in the form of a binary of success versus failure. The Third Ward established a baseline from which they measure their own material and social progress over time against what they perceive as an African American failure to achieve. In their own eyes, their success lends legitimacy to the “model minority” myth, even as it reaffirms prejudicial attitudes toward African Americans, evidenced by later observations on the superfluousness of affirmative action for African Americans. As South Asian students concluded their courses of study, they sought to relocate. Some students returned to their sending countries. Others moved out of state.

³⁴ U.M., interview, 21.

³⁵ The American Dream, model minority myth, and affirmative are discussed at greater length in other chapters. See also, Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

However, because Houston experienced vigorous economic expansion during the 1970s and jobs were plentiful, many Indian and Pakistani students remained in the city and secured full-time employment, moving from substandard student housing, through the city, and to the suburbs. The meaning of student experiences and subsequent immigrant residential choices reveals how race is, at the very least, operative in this decision-making process.

A.K. and R.K. married in their home city of Chennai, India, in 1975. Trained as an electrical engineer, A.K. had already resided in Houston for five years. His wife joined him and they selected Napoleon Square Apartments between Renwick and Rampart off of Bellaire Boulevard in southwest Houston. Pushing further southwest by one or two miles, they bought a condominium on Fondren and Bissonnet. Just a mile from there, they then purchased their first house in the neighborhood across from Houston Baptist University, off of Fondren. Finally, still remaining in Southwest Houston, they moved to a slightly larger house in the Westbury neighborhood by 1978, where they raised their children.³⁷

Quickly securing gainful employment upon graduation, former students left their roommates and off-campus apartments. Some had already left the vicinity of the university when they married. Now, paychecks in hand, recent graduates and increasingly, newly arrived South Asian immigrants could afford higher quality accommodations. In the brief window between 1970 and 1980, South Asians formed a pattern of renting apartments and purchasing first homes in the southwest Houston area, specifically in the subdivisions of Fondren Southwest and Sharpstown. The area appealed

³⁷ R.K., interview by author, 2 August 2007 (MDA), 20.

to immigrants for a number of reasons. Upwards of 80 percent of all residents in the area owned their own homes, among the highest such concentrations in the city.³⁸ For those not yet ready to buy a house, the area boasted high rates of new apartment construction.³⁹ The area averaged a comparatively high monthly apartment rent, and along with the rest of west and southwest Houston, housed the most educated segments of the population.⁴⁰

Living there briefly in 1970, A.S.A. remarked, “that was a really nice area in those days! Most of the engineers used to live in Sharpstown.”⁴¹ The pet project of developer Frank Sharp in the late 1950s through the 1960s, Sharpstown stretched over 4,000 acres of former prairie and boasted upscale housing, condominiums, a country club, and a gigantic indoor shopping mall. Most importantly, Sharp linked Sharpstown and southwest Houston’s development to Houston’s downtown by negotiating the construction of the Southwest Freeway, facilitating a mere thirteen minute commute to the central business district. When Indians and Pakistani began moving to Sharpstown and the area in the 1970s, it was still new, with the main mall just opening in 1962.⁴² In the late 1960s, when M.S. was still a student, he visited South Asian friends who had just purchased a home within walking distance of the new mall. The development was so removed from the urban density of the university area that he joked to his friends “You

³⁸ Houston City Planning Department, *City Wide Study* (Houston: July 1973).

³⁹ Houston City Planning Department, *1973 Annual Report* (1973).

⁴⁰ Houston City Planning Department, *City Wide Study* (Houston: July 1973), 49, 52, 55.

⁴¹ A.S.A., interview by author, 5 September 2011 (MDA), 27.

⁴² Mickey Herskowitz, *Sharpstown Revisited: Frank Sharp and a Tale of Dirty Politics in Texas* (Austin, Tex.: Eakin Press, 1994), 52-9.

couldn't find any other place...than coming out of town" to Sharpstown?⁴³ He explained that "there was nothing there. There were no high rise buildings, [no] downtown. There was only one HL&P building in those days, probably twenty-five, thirty floors. That was it." Sharpstown, though well within the city limits, embodied the suburban ideal of ranch-style homes, generous yard space, and a location convenient but not too close to the central business district. Eventually, what Houstonians once viewed as suburban or peripheral was reconceptualized as more central in the midst of urban sprawl.

U.R., who had recently purchased a home in the Glenshire subdivision of southwest Houston, recalled her neighbors as "mostly" or "all" professionals, while another characterized them as engineers and accountants.⁴⁴ In fact, residents living on west side of the city, which included Sharpstown and Fondren Southwest, were highly professionalized and had an annual median income between \$7,216 and \$13,509.⁴⁵ With the exception of a few select pockets of affluence in the city such as River Oaks, southwest Houstonians out-earned other residents of Houston. By comparison, residents living in vicinity of UH earned between \$1,643 and \$3,757.⁴⁶ In addition, U.R. found that her neighbors were "family oriented with young kids probably similar to my children's age."⁴⁷ Her neighbors were mostly "Americans, white Americans and as well as black" but "not too many [Hispanics]. At that time we did not know that many Hispanic people."

⁴³ M.S., interview, 15.

⁴⁴ U.R., interview by author, 8 June 2011 (MDA); A.S.A., interview, 28.

⁴⁵ Research Bureau Community Council, *Demographic Characteristics of Harris County, Part II: Social and Economic Variables*, (Houston, Texas: December 1963), 27.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ U.R., interview, 9.

⁴⁸ P.B., who moved to Houston from Madras, India, in 1971, recalled that “most Indians seemed to live either in the southwest part of town or in the northwest.”⁴⁹ Settling comfortably into young family life, U.R. reflected that “we were quite happy.”⁵⁰

South Asians found residence in the broad vicinity of southwest Houston to be initially appealing, though in later years, problematic. Upon arriving in Houston as engineering and MBA students, respectively, V.A.K. and his wife moved to Sharpstown because they had a friend who lived there. Residing in the Sharpstown area from 1979 to 1981, V.A.K. offered that it used to be a “really nice place...but then there started a little down trend and then the apartment complexes, to keep their occupancy rates high, they drop their rates and that allows lower income folks, maybe, to move in.”⁵¹ Soon after moving to a Sharpstown apartment, V.A.K. and his wife “had indications in 1980 that it was getting really bad out there” due to “a bad location”⁵² Within a decade, what Houstonians had once recognized as a prime neighborhood was transformed into an area to be avoided. Residents perceived higher crime rates as illustrated one night when a neighbor fired gunshots through V.A.K.’s bedroom closet. Separately, someone tried to break down his front door with a sharp, heavy object, possibly an ax.⁵³ Even those South Asians who lived in other parts of Houston—such as Montrose, in the city or out on I-10 and Kirkwood further west—perceived that the Fondren Southwest area had gone “bad,”

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ P.B., interview with author, 11 June 2007 (MDA), 15.

⁵⁰ U.R., interview, 9.

⁵¹ V.A.K., interview with author, 17 August 2011 (MDA), 7.

⁵² Ibid., 5.

⁵³ Ibid.

meaning that as crime increased, “people started running farther away”⁵⁴ R.P. explained that “there used to be huge houses, doctors all lived there. Then they built three or four apartments... and it deteriorated the entire South Fondren area completely. Good people moved out from there. So, it used to be a good area, close to town and everything. It has become... people are going farther and farther.”⁵⁵

Houston’s booming economy in the 1970s attracted thousands of migrants every week, and southwest Houston’s developers met the demand for housing by financing the construction of multi-family residences. Perhaps more so than in other areas, numerous townhomes, condominiums, and apartments existed alongside expansive bedroom communities. Indeed, federal funding for the establishment of NASA’s Johnson Space Center in Houston in 1961 expedited the growth of an already-expanding city. Regarded as a “luminous jewel” by southern Democrats for its science and technology-based economic potential, by 1965 Houston “ranked first in the Southwest in population, manufacturing payroll, value added, and as an industrial and consumer market.”⁵⁶ The local economy would soar for more than a decade, leading to the construction of so many middle- to upper-range condominiums and apartment complexes that their supply outstripped demand.⁵⁷ While the robust economy of the 1970s kept area housing prices inflated, the oil bust in the early 1980s toppled Houston’s housing market. Both home

⁵⁴ R.P., interview with author, 15 November 2011 (SAADA), 33, 36.

⁵⁵ R.P., interview, 39. The act of searching for words, such as the interviewee does in this quote, is discussed further in chapter four.

⁵⁶ Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938 – 1980* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 149.

⁵⁷ Schulman, 175. As Schulman emphasizes, “a quarter of the city’s population” continued to live “in substandard housing,” 175.

values and rent prices plummeted, opening up southwest Houston to a greater range of income earners. Apartment renters observed this phenomenon closely and ultimately decided that another mass movement was in order. A.S.A. reasoned that once prices fell and lower income earners moved into the neighborhood, then the school district quality suffered.⁵⁸ After the early 1980s, middle-income South Asian immigrant families bypassed the Fondren area altogether, targeting directly the far southwest suburb of Alief. The rare few who remained eventually joined their co-ethnics in distant suburbs, though for reasons discussed later in this chapter.

In order to protect themselves and their families from what they perceived as higher rates of urban crime, lower educational standards, and the lax family values of lower income earners, South Asians looked toward the suburbs and incorporated areas just outside of Houston. They moved to Spring Branch, Pasadena, Missouri City, Katy, and in the largest numbers, to Alief. R.P. moved to Katy in 1973 and remained there for many years, witnessing increasing numbers of Asian Indians settle in the area. Katy, in her experience, offered good schools, white collar neighbors, and a crime-free existence. After living in Katy for “many years,” R.P. “never heard of crimes or drugs or anything” in the vicinity, “neither burglary [nor] house theft, nothing.”⁵⁹ She continued that “even now there isn’t crime in Katy” because, in her opinion, Katy’s population has remained free of African Americans and to a lesser extent, Hispanics.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ A.S.A., interview, 28-29.

⁵⁹ R.P., interview, 36.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 37-38.

S.K. cited good schools as the main reason he and his wife moved to Spring Branch, even though their apartment was located further away from S.K.'s workplace.⁶¹ S.K. said that it was only after moving that he came to fully understand that the Spring Branch-Memorial area was "rich and special."⁶² They assessed the move as a positive one in spite of their neighbors' reticence toward them. S.K. remarked that white American neighbors [were] reserved in their dealings with him and as a result, he did not socialize freely with them.⁶³ At least now, he rationalized, their two children could attend high performing public schools.

Alief, a part of Harris County and a former Houston suburb, was largely annexed by the City of Houston in the 1970s.⁶⁴ Its population expanded and diversified in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1970, Alief's population of 8,000 was almost entirely white and already fairly professionalized, with 33 percent in professional or technical occupations. Of the remaining individuals, roughly half worked in sales, management, and clerical positions.⁶⁵ Still, in some areas, it was only minimally settled, with a total number of 2,397 housing units.⁶⁶ Within a decade, developers invested in five thousand new housing units and the population more than doubled to roughly 18,000 by 1980. Interestingly, after the white majority population, Asians comprised the largest group at over 12 percent

⁶¹ S.K. and V.K., interview with author, 16 August 2011 (MDA), 14-15.

⁶² S.K. and V.K., interview, 14.

⁶³ S.K. and V.K., interview, 25.

⁶⁴ Claudia Hazlewood, "ALIEF, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hja04>), accessed September 21, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

⁶⁵ Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 1970, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau (Table SE:T65)

⁶⁶ Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 1970, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau (Table SE:T1; T107) for Census Tracts 437 and 438 which contain the fuzzy boundaries of Alief.

in 1980—well above the average Houston Asian population of 2.1 percent.⁶⁷ In the neighborhood of Mission Bend where so many Indian and Pakistani families purchased homes, almost 40 percent of the residents were Asian Indians, while in Alief broadly, Asian Indians made up more than 36 percent of all Asians.⁶⁸ Also notable was the low percentage of African Americans and Hispanics, both less than 3 percent.

South Asian immigrants noted that Alief neighborhoods offered new housing—construction of most homes occurred between 1975 and 1978—open spaces, good schools, and once again, white-collar neighbors.⁶⁹ Real estate advertisements touted Alief schools as a strong selling point.⁷⁰ Eighty-five percent of their neighbors worked in professional, technical, or managerial jobs, out-earning their City of Houston neighbors by eight thousand dollars per year.⁷¹ P.D. and his wife purchased their first home in Alief, but not because they had children. Rather, “we wanted to stay in the southwest part of town because most of our friends live in this neighborhood and this was a new housing subdivision being built so houses were new. We wanted a new house and we found a house that we liked and in our price range.”⁷²

⁶⁷ Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 1980, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau (Table SE:T12; T13; T18) for Census Tracts 437.1, 437.2, and 438.6.

⁶⁸ In the city of Houston, 20 percent of all Asians were Asian Indian. There is no data available for Pakistanis as a subgroup. Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 1980, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau (Table SE:T12) for Census Tracts 437.1, 437.2, and 438.6. Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino were 27.3, 15.5, and 14.4 percent, respectively.

⁶⁹ Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 1980, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau (Table SE:T85) for Census Tracts 437.1, 437.2, and 438.6.

⁷⁰ “Real Estate Supplement,” *The Houston Post*, 14 August 1977, sec. BB, p.3.

⁷¹ Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 1980, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau (Table SE:T50; TE59) for Census Tracts 437.1, 437.2, and 438.6 and Houston city.

⁷² P.D., interview, 16.

Few interviewees employed the language of race when describing their decision-making process. Allusions to race only surfaced when immigrants reflected on how their Alief neighborhoods changed. After moving to Alief in 1970 because “Alief and Spring Branch were the two big school districts,” A.S.A. lamented that both school districts had “gone bad.” He explained:

When all the companies went down, went from 2,000 people to 200 people...those people were laid off so they left.... So those apartments rates, apartments that [charged] \$450 a month went down. Within a year they went down to \$180. And with all these things, it’s “one month free” and this and that. So all of a sudden, that thing, instead of being typical educated white collar workers it became single parents or blue collar workers and all that stuff. Then once that happened, then the school district went down, and then everything went down. So it’s a vicious circle [*sic*].⁷³

But change in Alief was not just class-based, according to A.S.A., since most of the people that came in were either Hispanics or African American.”⁷⁴

Indian and Pakistani residents of Alief in the 1980s noted with alarm a major area transformation resulting from a devastating regional economic recession. Houston, the proud “Golden Buckle of the Sunbelt,” had experienced only growth since after World War II. Houston’s boosters touted the city as the fastest-growing city in the nation, with

⁷³ A.S.A., interview, 28-30.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 31.

an unprecedented expansion of jobs, attracting 1,300 new migrants per week in the late 1970s.⁷⁵ Consequently, the housing market soared to keep pace with the demands of prospective new home buyers. Home prices increased by an unheard of 19 percent between 1980 and 1982.⁷⁶ It was in this frenzied economic climate that large numbers of South Asians purchased homes in Alief and, to a much lesser degree, in Spring Branch and Pasadena.

In the major recession that began in 1983 and mired Houston's economy for the remainder of the decade, home prices plummeted. After peaking in 1982, home prices began a steep descent. The recession disproportionately impacted house values in Alief in particular, and in other areas removed from the city center. Conversely, home prices in highly affluent West University Place, located close the city center, increased by 39 percent between 1980 and 1984.

Likewise, other affluent areas near the city core, such as Meyerland and Bellaire, reflected a similar, though not as steep, trend. On the other hand, by 1984 Alief homes, which had long sold at a much lower price point, had returned to 1980 prices and continued falling. Houses in a price point comparable to Alief, even those optimally located in the city, suffered price stagnation. For example, just down the road from Meyerland, Fondren Southwest home prices carried virtually the same price as four years earlier.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Steven L. Klineberg, "Houston's Economic and Demographic Transformations," (Rice University: 2002), 4.

⁷⁶ Barton Smith, "Recent Developments in Houston Home Prices," (University of Houston, Center for Public Policy: February 1985), 1.

⁷⁷ South Asians had disproportionately opted to live in Fondren Southwest in the 1970s.

The surplus of available, now foreclosed housing drove down both home and rent prices in Alief, allowing newcomers, once priced out of Alief, to afford residence.⁷⁸ As A.S.A. said, “After 30 years I didn’t make any money on that house... I bought it for \$90,000 back in 1980 that’s like \$250,000 or \$200,000 now. I couldn’t even sell it for that money. I just gave it out to those Cheap Houses people so you don’t have to worry about it. They just give you \$20,000 less. Then you walk out.”⁷⁹ Alief homeowner M.K. shared a similar story. Driving around one afternoon in 1977, a well-groomed tree in front of a house for sale caught his eye. Stopping the car, he and his white American wife, B.K., spoke with the owners and, impressed with their friendliness, looked at the inside of the house. Without any knowledge of square footage (it ended up too small for their growing family) or repairs needed, they agreed to purchase the house in the Pompano Lane subdivision. Later, he judged his decision as “just stupidity.... My wife still curses” that decision. “I was not very good with the real estate,” otherwise we “could have bought a house in the central area.” The house never sold nor appreciated much in value.⁸⁰ In 1981, M.K. and B.K. placed the house for rent and moved to a “nicer,” bigger house in another Alief subdivision. The house cost them \$200,000, and though they considered it a strong investment, M.K. lost his job during the recession, rendering the house payments a real liability. In 1984, several house appraisals later, the couple was crestfallen to learn that appraisal estimates ranged between 110 and 120 thousand dollars. They decided to sell the house themselves but the market simply did not exist. A house-

⁷⁸ Barton Smith, “Recent Developments in Houston Home Prices,” 5 and passim.

⁷⁹ A.S.A., interview, 30.

⁸⁰ M.K., interview with author, 5 September 2011 (MDA), 17-20.

buying company took it for less than the appraisal price. M.K. reflected that Houston went through a “devastation” that was “terrible. It was terrible.”⁸¹

Aside from the financial losses sustained by Houstonians, Alief residents lamented other changes. New neighbors, South Asians noted, seemed mostly to be African American and Hispanic, though not white collar workers. A.S.A. observed that the original residents moved away. “Out of that twenty there are only two people that are still there, everybody’s gone.”⁸² Like A.S.A., M.K. noticed that the neighborhood slowly shifted from entirely white to majority “Hispanic,” symbolizing Alief’s downturn.⁸³ “Older” residents kept “moving to the better places,” and “the neighborhood went down a little bit.”⁸⁴ When asked to define “went down,” M.K. said “it was almost 100 percent white” when they had moved there, though he quickly offered that the racial demographics were “not a question to me.”⁸⁵ Though M.K. temporarily moved to other cities and even to Indonesia for two years when he found no employment in Houston, he eventually returned to live in the house in Pompano Lane. He estimated that by 2011, the population breakdown was roughly 70 percent Hispanic, 10 percent African American, with the rest white and Chinese.

Ultimately, South Asian immigrants decided that Alief was “just like Houston now, it’s not anything different.”⁸⁶ As new neighbors replaced old, South Asians felt

⁸¹ Ibid., 20-21.

⁸² A.S.A., interview, 30-31.

⁸³ M.K., interview, 18.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ A.S.A., interview, 31.

certain of increased crime. Though A.S.A. and his family were not victimized by crime, nevertheless, “every day you hear about it.” Whether “on that corner somebody shot somebody” or “at this gas station somebody shot somebody.” Others who remained in Alief through the downturn and neighborhood transformation have expressed recent interest in moving to Sugar Land. S.M. moved to Alief in 1980 and has observed what he regards as further area deterioration. In recent years, he is certain that the crime rate has increased and attributes the increase to “Katrina refugees,” a largely African American population that found shelter in Houston in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.⁸⁷ Because of the increase in crime, after thirty years in the neighborhood, S.M. and his wife are seriously considering moving, likely to Sugar Land. For most, these changes demanded a dramatic response. While established residents had silently protested the presence of a “different” type of neighbor in the mid-1980s, by the end of the decade, they would protest with their feet by moving away.

As the very features that attracted immigrants to Alief in the early 1980s dissolved, South Asians Americans sought the same features elsewhere in Sugar Land. Once more, they found high-performing public schools, professional neighbors, and a low crime rate. Though many of their children were now in college, South Asian immigrants associated “good schools” with higher home values and a family-oriented resident profile. Through their experience in Alief, they came to appreciate the perks of living in close proximity to other co-ethnics. In Sugar Land after 1990, they joined thousands of other new immigrants from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to produce a new ethnic enclave complete with ethnic restaurants, beauty salons, grocery stores,

⁸⁷ S.M., interview with author, 21 September 2011 (MDA), 45.

clothing boutiques, and an alternative home-based, small business network. Sugar Land—of recent country music and distant sugar production fame—lies nineteen miles southwest of Houston’s downtown. Incorporated in 1959, the city of Sugar Land was established on land once owned by Mexico and subsequently granted to Stephen F. Austin in 1836.⁸⁸ Long known as a company town so named for its cultivation and refining of cane sugar, its main industries through the mid-1980s partly included sugar, tools, industrial parts, and oilfield services.⁸⁹ Sugar Land companies employing a large number of local engineers—convenient for South Asian American engineers—include Schlumberger and Fluor Corporation.⁹⁰ Between 1980 and 2000, the population of Sugar Land expanded from 12,500 to 63,000.⁹¹ The next decade saw an increase of an additional 25,000 residents.

Asians from India and Pakistan have shown a strong presence in Sugar Land since as early as 1980, making up over 25 percent of the overall Asian population. By 2010, they were the largest combined subgroup, comprising over 40 percent of all Asians in Sugar Land. Asians in general were the fastest growing racial group, expanding to over 35 percent of the population, while whites were roughly 50 percent, and African Americans only 7.4 percent in 2010. Since 1980, the African American population grew

⁸⁸ City of Sugar Land, *Sugar Land* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 7.

⁸⁹ Richmond County Library (RCL), Vertical Files, ‘Sugar Land, Texas’ fact sheet (Oct 16, 1985), np.

⁹⁰ RCL, Vertical Files, ‘City of Sugar Land Brochure,’ (Sugar Land, Texas), np.

⁹¹ Don Munsch, “Sugar Land still home to its namesake, Imperial Sugar,” *Fort Bend Herald* (14 July 2009), np;
Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 1980, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau (Table SE:T13) for census tracts 702.1-4.

by only 2 percent while the Hispanic population also remained small.⁹² Those interviewees who live away from Sugar Land repeatedly evoke the suburb when referring to the “Indian and Pakistani community.” It is considered the hub of social activity, with the most concentrated cluster of South Asians in Houston. As even South Asians from other parts of the U.S. anecdotally relate, “Everybody has some uncle, auntie, or friend in Sugar Land.” Furthermore, Indian and Pakistani immigrants in Sugar Land utilize the notion of a shared South Asian identity as P.B. said, “Take Sugar Land, for example. Or Alief. Everybody lives everywhere.”⁹³ P.B. collapses boundaries between Indians and Pakistanis when she employs the term “everybody.” In addition, she sees Indians and Pakistanis living as part of a single, large, imagined community of South Asians in Sugar Land rather than in separate “Pakistani commune[s] or Indian commune[s].”⁹⁴ It remains to be seen whether the South Asian community will reside in Sugar Land over the next few decades. For the time being, house prices remain high, schools remain competitive, and people of color remain few.

Regarding residential self-segregation, research indicates that whites usually prefer to live in neighborhoods with a ceiling of 20 percent African American or Hispanic residents.⁹⁵ Even if the neighborhoods boast a low crime rate, high quality schools, and high housing values, which are the most commonly cited reasons for choosing a neighborhood, whites in Houston still prefer largely non-black and non-Hispanic

⁹² SE (Table T54; TE57); US Census Bureau, 1980; 2010.

⁹³ P.B., interview.

⁹⁴ A.K., interview with author, 2 August 2007 (MDA), 25.

⁹⁵ Valerie A. Lewis, Michael O. Emerson, and Stephen L. Klineberg, “Who We’ll Live With: Neighborhood Racial Composition Preferences of Whites, Blacks, and Latinos,” *Social Forces* 89 no.4 (June 2011), 1385.

neighborhoods. I call attention to this research because in regards to the presence of Asians in a neighborhood, whites in Houston exhibit no negative preference at all.⁹⁶ In other words, whites do not mind living in a neighborhood with Asians but *do* mind living in a neighborhood with more than a 20 percent black or Hispanic population.

Houston's many suburbs have long been home to the working class, Hispanics, African Americans, and Southeast Asians. Like white Americans, professional South Asians have historically avoided economically diverse and heavily non-white neighborhoods, preferring professional, majority white suburbs as home. A.S.A. explained that "those who were white collar workers, they were moving to Sugar Land or Katy. So that's what happened. It's all the white collar workers [who] were moving where the school districts were good so they were going to Katy or Sugar Land on this side, or Clear Lake or wherever it was."⁹⁷

The suburbs emerged as an unexpectedly prominent character in the narrative of immigrant settlement. Immigrants from the Subcontinent can be found largely in the suburbs north and southwest of the city. Twenty-five out of thirty interviewees for this project—all chosen for their date of migration to Houston between 1960 and 1980—currently live in the suburbs. These twenty-five interviewees moved to a suburb as soon as they could afford it, often within three or four years of arrival in the United States. When asked why they chose to live in these specific areas, the usual responses included good schools, proximity to work, friends who lived nearby, or a coworker or friends'

⁹⁶ Michael O. Emerson, Karen J. Chai and George Yancey, "Does Race Matter in Residential Segregation? Exploring the Preferences of White Americans," *American Sociological Review* 66 no. 6 (Dec. 2001), 927; Lewis, Emerson, and Klineberg, "Who We'll Live With: Neighborhood Racial Composition Preferences of Whites, Blacks, and Latinos," 1397.

⁹⁷ A.S.A., interview, 31.

recommendation of a “good neighborhood.” Any mention of race was conspicuously absent in these responses; however, as shown earlier in this chapter, South Asians reveal both intention and meaning when they note that a neighborhood is “good,” especially when other neighborhoods fall in closer proximity to work locations. The term “good” is not an empty signifier; rather, it reflects social aspirations, cultural fears, and material accessibility.

Prior to the American Revolution, North American suburbs began to emerge just outside cities such as Boston and New York with competitive levels of suburban growth intensifying in the early nineteenth century.⁹⁸ The urban poor flocked to the more affordable, distant outskirts of the city.⁹⁹ By the mid-nineteenth century in the United States, in large part due to the transportation revolution and robust urban migration and immigration, urban peripheries grew commensurate with city centers, and wealthier citizens increasingly sought homes away from the industrial congestion and pollution of the city core. With the aid of federal dollars, suburban expansion exploded mainly after 1945, and middle-class families, both black and white, sought to move to the suburbs. Between 1945 and 1955 the number of middle-class African Americans moving to the suburbs increased by one million.¹⁰⁰ In 1950 only 23 percent of the United States’ population resided in the suburbs, whereas by 1980 over 40 percent did so—a greater

⁹⁸ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 13.

⁹⁹ Jackson, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Wiese, “‘The House I Live In’: Race, Class, and African American Suburban Dreams in the Postwar United States,” in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, ed. Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 101.

population percentage than either urbanites or rural residents.¹⁰¹ By 2000, that number had increased to 50 percent. Americans prefer residence in the suburbs, embracing its “high maintenance and long[er] commute.”¹⁰² South Asians and other wealthy and middle-class Americans may work in urban areas but they generally opt to live in suburban areas in detached, self-owned homes, with ample yard space, and more importantly, generous distance between their homes and the perceived and real dangers of the city.¹⁰³

Realtors understood the signifiers that held specific connotation for potential buyers of all races. Home-buyers relied on realtors to help them make sound real estate choices. U.R. notes that “this is what the realtor told us and we accepted that.”¹⁰⁴ Starting in the early 1980s, South Asian realtors placed ads in South Asian community newspapers like *Indo-American News*, highlighting the same features as real estate ads in city-wide newspapers: “house size, convenient location, good school district, new construction, quiet neighborhood.” Similarly, thirty years earlier, African American, first-time home buyers had “sought adequate play space for children, good schools, safety and quiet, good property maintenance, and congenial neighbors of roughly equivalent income and educational background.”¹⁰⁵ These housing expectations reflected and grew out of a

¹⁰¹ John Rennie Short, *Urban Theory: A Critical Assessment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 8; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 4.

¹⁰² Becky Nicolaides, “How Hell Moved From the City to the Suburbs”: Urban Scholars and Changing Perceptions of Authentic Community,” in *The New Suburban History*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2006), 93.

¹⁰³ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ U.R., interview, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Wiese, “The House I Live In,” in Kusmer and Trotter, 104-5.

family-centric moment in American history that focused on children mainly because of the baby boom.¹⁰⁶ This postwar era of unprecedented economic prosperity featured veterans buying homes through the G.I. Bill and the unprecedented sprawl of cities. The expansion of suburbs in large southern cities—partly due to white flight from desegregating neighborhoods—fostered new, racially inflected meanings for terms such as “good schools,” and “family oriented” neighborhoods. Other reasons include “preferences for spaciousness, rising incomes, and the steady long-term decline in communications and transportation costs.”¹⁰⁷

Suburbs have been variously read by critics and the broader public as stifling, conformist, exclusive, both excessively community-oriented and not community-oriented enough.¹⁰⁸ Post –World War II urban critics insisted on the “environmental determinism” of the suburbs—as a place that determined the culture it produced, and even more recent historians suggest that the built space surrounding us “sets up living patterns that condition our behavior.”¹⁰⁹ While some academics decried the city as a place that obliterated community relations due to the impersonality of its interactions, others argued that the increased density, diversity, and foot traffic of the city created the ideal conditions for creativity and sociality.¹¹⁰ William H. Whyte cautioned that the concept of

¹⁰⁶ See Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families And The Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

¹⁰⁷ Peter Gordon, Harry W. Richardson, and Soojung Kim, “Where Americans Live, Work and Do Business: Thirty-Five Year Trends,” paper presented at 47th Annual Western Regional Science Association Meetings (2008), 2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Becky Nicolaides, “How Hell Moved From the City to the Suburbs,” in Kruse and Sugrue, 80-83.

¹⁰⁹ Nicolaides, 81; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 3.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

community, especially as it existed in the suburbs, was crushing in its pressure to join the “group.”¹¹¹ Still, such critics neglected to explain why, if the suburbs were confining to a fault, people continued to flock to them. Even today, far from fleeing suburban traps, Americans continue to choose the suburban periphery over the urban core. Some scholars have predicted that gentrification—the economic revitalization of otherwise undervalued areas—suggests a national return to urban living. Rather, since 1990, suburban and exurban trends have continued to rise. For example, the Houston metropolitan area has experienced an increase of over 938,000 residents, of whom only 323,000 people decided to live in the city core. The majority—65.6 percent or 615,000—moved to the suburbs.¹¹² Nationally, 84 percent of metropolitan expansion between 1990 and 2000 occurred in the suburbs, rather than in gentrifying areas within the city.¹¹³

Those who were double immigrants, migrating first to England and then to the United States, noted palpable differences in potential standards of living after moving to the U.S., though to be sure, many South Asian students in the U.S. experienced similarly decrepit housing conditions as in London. In the early 1970s, however, South Asians in England faced serious housing discrimination while those in Houston faced it to a lesser degree, as discussed in another chapter. A.K., working for the British firm, Burroughs, compared housing conditions in London to India: “The only difference,” he said, was that in London, “they were not huts.” He described housing for Asians in urban England as “hopelessly closed in, no heating. A lot of apartments had a lot of problems. They were

¹¹¹ Ibid., 92-3.

¹¹² <http://www.demographia.com/db-2000coresub.htm>, cited in Gordon, Richardson, and Kim, “Where Americans Live, Work and Do Business,” (2008).

¹¹³ Gordon, Richardson, and Kim, “Where Americans Live, Work and Do Business,” 2.

poor actually. It appeared to be great living but it was not.... All the plumbing and the whole place was a mess in many, many places. Nothing to speak of.”¹¹⁴ By contrast, A.K. moved to an apartment—“one single, cute room” for 70 dollars per month—near the Rice University area; he found conditions far superior to those that many Asians were relegated to in London.¹¹⁵

As early as 1973, houses in the best condition were located in the southwest and western quadrants of the city of Houston. A report issued by the City Planning Department indicated that houses of “poor condition” surrounded the downtown central business district, extending especially east of downtown. The northeast quadrant of the city contained homes in overwhelmingly “fair condition,” while homes throughout the southeast and parts of northwest Houston were considered to range from mostly “fair” to some in “good” condition. Houses in southwest Houston, to which so many Houstonians moved, were in “excellent condition,” were newer than in other parts of city, and had working plumbing systems, unlike those in the inner city.¹¹⁶

Not surprisingly, for early South Asian immigrants, “community” played a role in the decision to suburbanize. As one immigrant said, “our culture is community, mostly.”¹¹⁷ South Asians in the seventies formed “primary communities” with co-ethnics, especially those sharing the same suburban neighborhoods, as well as with co-ethnics elsewhere in the metropolitan area through community associations, religious groups, and

¹¹⁴ A.K., interview, 24.

¹¹⁵ A.K., interview, 8.

¹¹⁶ Houston City Planning Department, *City Wide Study* (Houston: July 1973), 18-19.

¹¹⁷ Z.A., interview with author, 21 January 2007 (MDA), 26. The concept of community will be analyzed further in another chapter.

private social evenings. Extensive socialization during weekends occurred mostly, if not exclusively, with co-ethnics through formal social networks such as ethnic organizations, religious institutions, and a loose ethnic economy, and more informally, by way of regular weekend dinner parties. At that point in the evolution of Houston's South Asian community, I define the weak ethnic economy as: a subset of the general labor market, in which small businesses are both run by and supported by co-ethnics but which are neither spatially clustered nor necessarily intended to turn a profit. This included home-based enterprises such as selling Indian spices from one's garage or small rented shops, the showing of (and selling tickets to) Indian movies in public spaces, staging of public performances by Indian singers, and more loosely, even the use of public radio to air Indian music.¹¹⁸ Driving to the city—and especially the university—for community events unlinked the concept of community from physical proximity.¹¹⁹ In addition to these connections, South Asian immigrants formed “secondary community” relationships with non-South Asian neighbors in which their children attended school and played together, and neighbors hosted block parties.

In the American imagination, though the suburbs embody conformity and environmental excess, in reality, “suburbs” defy any simple categorization. They are neither racially nor economically uniform though many individual suburban neighborhoods are far more uniform than others in terms of wealth and ethnicity. Many more suburbs boast a high level of diversity. But despite the differences, what remains

¹¹⁸ The Hillcroft area—a strong South Asian ethnic economy featuring spatial clustering, a wide range of strongly capitalistic enterprises, catered toward co-ethnics but also serving other ethnicities, and finally, employing other ethnics as well—did not develop until the late 1970s to the late 1980s.

¹¹⁹ See Quraishi, “Educationally Empowered,” (2008).

particularly striking about the relationship between American urban cores and peripheries is that “status and income correlate with the suburbs.”¹²⁰ That is, residents of suburbs are likelier to be more highly educated, earn larger incomes, and are more professionalized than city dwellers. The gap between residents of cities versus surrounding spaces in terms of income and other markers of socioeconomic success has continued to grow since at least the 1970s.¹²¹ Due to the concentration of public housing, low income neighborhoods, and preponderance of historically black neighborhoods near city cores, wealth increases incrementally the further one moves away from core.¹²²

In Houston, this generalization is applicable but only if qualified. As shown in Map 2, in 1960, the concentration of poverty coincided first with the city core, then directly northeast of downtown, and with one pocket to the south of downtown.¹²³ By 1980, as shown in Map 3, residents of the city core and northeast Houston continued to earn the lowest incomes in the metropolitan area while the wealthiest residents continued to occupy areas west and far southeast (i.e. Clear Lake and the NASA area) of the city. Thus, residents in affluent areas resided largely in the west and southwest portions of the city and for them, the line between urban and suburban ran north to south, dividing the city into halves, rather than *around* the city core, dividing the city by concentric circles. The underlying logic—that of an urban versus suburban imaginary still obtains.

¹²⁰ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 8.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Rural areas well beyond the city limits but still part of the metropolitan area obviously had very low median income levels, similar to those found in the city core. See Map 3, Map 2A and 2B.

Investors in suburbia strove to preserve their wealth in a number of ways. Incorporated suburbs generally maintain the right to determine the types of housing, commercial development, and public transportation available in their jurisdiction. Developers and residents in affluent suburbs especially have historically rejected policies that jeopardized real estate values such as low-cost housing, public housing, or numerous multi-family dwelling units. Thus, though land has typically been less inexpensive in the suburbs due to abundant supply, by controlling lot sizes, housing type, square footage range, and overall cost of construction, developers exercise great control over the median value of homes in an area. In addition, by restricting public transport options and advocating for strict school district boundaries (though not always successfully), residents restrict access to their lifestyle and public services (i.e. commuting and quality schools).

Like all major cities in the United States, Houston has undergone substantial changes in the last half century. As early as 1960, Harris County, which subsumes Houston, its incorporated areas, and its immediate periphery, outpaced the average rate of growth in the United States. Between 1950 and 1960, when the population of the United States increased by 18.5 percent, Houston's rate of increase was 54.1 percent.¹²⁴ During the 1960s, the population increased by 40 percent and then by another 38 percent during the seventies.¹²⁵ Still, by 1960, other cities in the United States, including Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, and San Antonio housed a far greater percentage of immigrants

¹²⁴ Research Bureau Community Council, *Demographic Characteristics of Harris County, Part I: Population Change* (Houston, Texas: February 1963), 1.

¹²⁵ Steven L. Klineberg, "Houston's Economic and Demographic Transformations" (Houston: Rice University, 2002).

than did Houston.¹²⁶ That imbalance would tilt heavily toward Houston after passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Cellar Act). Immigrants from Asia and Latin America aided in the extraordinary growth of the city, and as they did so, they helped reconfigure the composition of neighborhoods new and old. By the 1970s, the time at which a significant number of South Asians had started settling in areas outside of Houston's central core, suburban development had been underway for only a short time. Much as the unprecedented growth of cities in the industrial era relied on the influx of rural migrants and European immigrants, the exponential growth of suburbs in Houston after 1970 relied on urban migrants and Asian and Hispanic immigrants.

All ethno-racial groups have tracked new paths across the landscape of the city and its environs. The percentage of African Americans in Harris County between 1960 and 2005 remained fairly constant, varying between 19.8 and 18.4 percent.¹²⁷ The percentage of the three remaining large groups—whites, Hispanics, and Asians—altered dramatically. White residence in Harris County plummeted by half from 73.9 to 36.9 percent as thousands of middle-class white Americans left the city for the suburbs. Each decade since the 1960s has continued to see appreciable reductions in that population, with the 1990s showing an 11.5 percent drop. As whites migrated to the suburbs, the most significant growth within the city occurred in the number of Hispanics and Asians. In 1960 Hispanics comprised just 6 percent of all Harris County residents but by 2005 were a considerable 38.2 percent of total population, a six-fold increase. Similarly, Asian

¹²⁶ The immigrant population ranged between 22.5 and 32.8 percent for the listed cities while Houston's population was only 8.9 immigrant. Research Bureau Community Council, *Demographic Characteristics of Harris County, Part I*, 7.

¹²⁷ Stephen Klineberg, "An Historical Overview of Immigration in Houston, Based on the Houston Area Survey," (Houston: Rice University, 2008), 1.
http://has.rice.edu/downloads/?ekmensel=c580fa7b_8_0_1748_6.

residents increased their presence in the city to over 129,000 residents, though they remain a smaller segment at 6.1 percent.¹²⁸

With minorities comprising a large proportion of all city of Houston residents, Houston is known as a “majority-minority” city—one in which minority groups collectively outnumber the white majority at the urban level, unlike the white national majority. While certain areas have remained almost entirely white, black, or Hispanic, population groups have continually migrated throughout and beyond the city. What remains constant in terms of limiting the full racial integration of any area, is high income levels. As long as the average household income at any given time rests well above the city average, this insulates the area. For example, Bellaire, Meyerland, and Southside Place, all in southwest Houston, emerged less impacted by the recession of the early eighties. Thirty years later, they still stand among the most sound real estate investments within the city. Meanwhile, outside of these pockets of relative and stable affluence, the city’s demographic makeup yields to a constant evolution.

At the large group level, the population of Asian residents has increased in both the city and its suburbs, but the disaggregation of these numbers reveals wide class fissures. A comparison of Houston and Sugar Land shows that while Asians comprised 6 percent of Houston residents in 2010, by that time, over 35 percent of Sugar Land’s inhabitants were Asians.¹²⁹ Of the Asian population, Indians and Pakistanis collectively comprised the largest percentage—43 percent— of all Asians in Sugar Land.¹³⁰ While the

¹²⁸ Public Policy Division, *Population by Race/Ethnicity, City of Houston: 1980-2010, COH Data Sheet* (24 February 2010). Based on U.S. Census Bureau 1980-2010 and Census 2010 Redistricting Data.

¹²⁹ Social Explorer, Tables for percent of total population.

¹³⁰ Taken separately, Indians and Pakistani were 31 and 12 percent, respectively. Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau 2010, SE Table: T54; SE: T57) for Sugar Land city.

raw numbers of South Asians in the city of Houston far surpasses that in Sugar Land, their concentration in Sugar Land demands explanation.

Over time, as a subgroup, South Asian American families overwhelmingly chose to settle in whiter areas than those found within the city of Houston. Since at least 1960, the median income in such suburban areas outside Houston has outpaced that of city residents.¹³¹ Many, including African Americans who could afford to do so, moved out of the city into suburban housing. As the class composition of the city changed, so too did the racial distribution. Not only has the percentage of whites in the city of Houston consistently fallen, so too have the raw numbers of white individuals. In 1960, whites comprised 79 percent of Houston residents but by 1980, 52 percent of Houston's residents were white. By 2000, only 30 percent remained until 2010, when a mere 25.6 percent of Houstonians were white.¹³² Granted, the proportion of white residents relative to new immigrants of color was bound to decrease as newcomers from Asia and Latin America made Houston their home. Still, after peaking in 1970, the actual numbers of white residents in the city itself has continually fallen from just over one million in 1970 to roughly 538,000 in 2010.¹³³

The pattern of well-educated, high-earning South Asians predominantly settling in more affluent areas remained true for the city, in general. By 1985, "the distribution of workers closely parallel[ed] the spatial distribution of income and education in the

¹³¹ In 1960 these figures were \$5,902 per year for urban residents of Houston, versus \$6,685 for those in the urban fringe.

¹³² Public Policy Division, *Population by Race/Ethnicity, City of Houston: 1980-2010, COH Data Sheet* (24 February 2010). Based on U.S. Census Bureau 1980-2010 and Census 2010 Redistricting Data.

¹³³ Public Policy Division, *Population by Race/Ethnicity, City of Houston: 1980-2010*.

Houston area.”¹³⁴ Middle- and upper middle-income Houstonians in white-collar jobs resided chiefly in the west to northwest side of the city and increasingly, in Clear Lake, while working class residents opted for more affordable housing in the east to northeast side.¹³⁵ Residents employed in construction and manufacturing concentrated in neighborhoods far east of downtown, including Pasadena and Galena Park by 1985.¹³⁶ This area lay nearer to the Port of Houston and related industries. A small but substantial community of South Asians also emerged in Pasadena by the mid-1980s. The two communities differed from their inception as median household incomes in the Clear Lake area were higher than in Pasadena.¹³⁷ As immigrants just establishing their financial foundations, most South Asians were priced out of the most expensive parts of the city, including River Oaks, Memorial, Briar Forest, West University, Meyerland, and Bellaire, but Alief developers offered new homes at reasonable prices, well removed from the city center.¹³⁸

Like the city of Houston itself, Houston’s suburbs are hardly uniform in character. On average, they are neither all-white nor all-middle-class. Though early urban to suburban migration was mostly white, after 1980 African Americans and Latinos suburbanized at a much higher rate than whites. As a result, by 2000, 37 and 46 percent,

¹³⁴ Thomas R. Plaut, *Houston Metropolitan Area Profile*, (Austin: University of Texas at Austin-Bureau of Business Research, 1985), 4, Figure 3.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Social Explorer Maps (SE), Census 1980, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau (Table SE:T53).

¹³⁸ Barton Smith, “Recent Developments in Houston Home Prices” (Houston: University of Houston-Center for Public Policy, February 1985), 5.

respectively, of these minority groups resided in the Houston's suburbs.¹³⁹ The suburbs of Houston encompass a range of ethnicities, income, occupation, and education levels. Digital mapping data reveals how the percentages of all ethno-racial groups have shifted both within and between suburbs over time. For example, where African Americans once made up 53 percent of the population in Waller County, by 2010 they were only 22 percent.¹⁴⁰ Where African Americans once lived in concentrated areas near the city core and in particular rural areas in the region, they are now more widely dispersed across the city and its suburbs. As much as Latino Americans inhabit particular neighborhoods in the city—comprising nearly 44 percent of the city's population by 2010, many new Latino immigrants bypass the city entirely and move straight to the suburbs. Both Houston and the suburbs can lay claim to diversity.

The movement of Houston's minorities to the suburbs mirrors a national trend. During the 1950s and 1960s nationwide suburban housing boom, African Americans moved to the suburbs, a trend which has only increased with a growing African American middle-class.¹⁴¹ More recently, Latino Americans have done the same. By 1999, 31 percent of all African Americans lived in America's suburbs.¹⁴² Similarly, 51 and 54 percent of Asians and whites, respectively, and 44 percent of Hispanics live in the

¹³⁹ Institute on Race and Poverty, "Minority Suburbanization, Stable Integration, and Economic Opportunity in Fifteen Metropolitan Regions" (February 2006), 8.

¹⁴⁰ Social Explorer Maps, Census 1980, 1990, Social Explorer & U.S. Census Bureau.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹⁴² Michael Jones-Correa, "Reshaping the American Dream: Immigrants, Ethnic Minorities, and the Politics of the New Suburbs," in Kruse and Sugrue (2006), 184.

suburbs.¹⁴³ Yet the key suburbs for this study—the suburbs of Houston where Asians choose to live—remain strikingly uniform over time in terms of racial and economic composition. Nevertheless, the overall diversity of urban to suburban migration can foster a false sense of racial integration. Though all racial groups have a strong suburban presence, all racial groups do not live in the same suburbs together. Rather, multi-racial, integrated neighborhoods increased by only 2 percent in Houston from 1980 to 2000.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, whites showed much greater resistance to living in white-black neighborhoods than in white-Latino neighborhoods during the same time period. Only 1 percent of all neighborhoods were black-white in 2000, down from 6 percent in 1980.¹⁴⁵ The general trend has been one of hardly any progress toward integration. Seventy-three percent of all whites in the Houston area resided in the suburbs, mostly in neighborhoods with low rates of integration.¹⁴⁶

The suburbs to which early South Asian Americans have moved during the last forty years have been consistent with the settlement patterns of white Houstonians in similar income brackets. As the wealth gap between rich and poor continues to expand, so too does residential segregation between social classes and racialized groups. Though the stated intent cannot be reduced simply to racial fears or the explicit exclusion of racial or ethnic minorities, the reality of exclusion cannot be avoided. Movement to the urban fringes of the modern “Sunbelt” South, as exemplified by native white Houstonians and

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ “Minority Suburbanization, Stable Integration, and Economic Opportunity in Fifteen Metropolitan Regions,” Institute on Race and Poverty, 10.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

early Indian and Pakistani immigrants, reveals the embedded nature of class and race hierarchies. Concerns for property values, quality public services, and safety lead many middle-income city dwellers of all races and ethnicities out to the suburbs. In addition, these suburban homeowners benefited from tangible gains including low-interest mortgage rates and annual tax deductions. As shown in this chapter, however, for South Asian immigrants, the process of migration to the fringes of the city and beyond was explicitly marked by the language of race and class. This is also evidenced by their choice of specific suburbs. Although all suburbanites express concern for safety and quality living, not all exhibit strong racial preferences for their neighborhood composition. Whites have demonstrated a strong preference for living in majority white (or Asian) neighborhoods, though Hispanics in Houston exhibited no preference for any racial group, whether white, black, or Asian.¹⁴⁷ African Americans expressed hesitation about living in areas with high concentrations of Asians, though for reasons other than those voiced by whites in regard to African American neighborhoods.¹⁴⁸

Led to the suburbs by realtors and word-of-mouth networks at work and through social circles, South Asian suburbanites in the 1970s entered a process that had begun fairly recently for other Houstonians as well. By 1980, relatively few—only 57 percent—of Houston’s white population resided in the suburbs. Compared with other large metropolitan areas in the U.S., this was almost the lowest proportion in the country. For example, over 90 percent of white residents already lived in the suburbs of Atlanta,

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, Emerson, and Klineberg, “Who We’ll Live With: Neighborhood Racial Composition Preferences of Whites, Blacks, and Latinos,” 1398.

¹⁴⁸ The authors of this study emphasize that additional research is needed to explain African Americans’ negative preference for Asians. Lewis, Emerson, and Klineberg, 1401-2.

Boston, and Miami in 1980.¹⁴⁹ Houston's white (and South Asian) residents largely participated in the suburban trend over the subsequent two decades. As evidenced through oral histories, these recent suburbanites embraced the language and ideology of suburbia (e.g. safety versus crime, good versus bad, change versus stability), both of which are predicated on suburban exclusion and middle-class entitlement.¹⁵⁰

By moving to specific suburbs, South Asian immigrants aimed to replicate the lifestyles and values of affluent urban pockets. However, because the average income and house values were initially lower than the aforementioned urban pockets, the recession dragged these price points down to an affordable level for many others. A moderate value decrease for the highest priced homes still did not render them affordable to most buyers, whereas even a minimal decrease in reasonably priced homes opened up the market to all levels of residents. In addition, suburban and urban neighborhoods with a high proportion of multi-family structures were more vulnerable to severe price fluctuations. For this reason, Sugar Land residents continue to oppose the construction of apartments, townhomes, and condominiums in more affluent First Colony neighborhoods.¹⁵¹

Consistent with increased levels of immigration from India and Pakistan in the eighties and nineties, the number of South Asians in the city increased. As late as 2010, over 33,000 Indians and Pakistanis lived in Houston, so it is inaccurate to state that all South Asians immigrants became suburbanites. The choices of *early* immigrants, while representing a larger South Asian residential pattern (though by no means, the only one),

¹⁴⁹ "Minority Suburbanization, Stable Integration, and Economic Opportunity in Fifteen Metropolitan Regions," Institute on Race and Poverty, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), 2.

¹⁵¹ Patrick M. Walsh (Director of Transportation, City of Sugar Land), interview with author, 3 May 2012.

reveal the ways in which Houstonians assigned meaning to racial categories. If, as Michel de Certeau suggests, the act of walking in a city articulates a range of possibilities, mobility on a larger scale—from urban to suburban spaces, does much the same.¹⁵² Though the percentage of African Americans in the city actually decreased between 1970 and 2005, with noticeably fewer whites in the city, African Americans and Hispanics began to encapsulate the image of the city, its problems, and lack of relative wealth. Simultaneously, the wealth and status of white residents in particular suburbs resonated strongly with the middle-class lifestyle toward which South Asian immigrants aspired.

The ways in which South Asian immigrants viewed or imagined urban and suburban landscapes were crucial to the decision-making process. South Asian immigrants saw the city as a place of danger, weak values, and low academic commitment, whereas key suburbs were viewed as an urban counterpart embodying the ideals of familism, education, and professionalization. That people of color also inhabited the suburbs mattered little. Though the urban and suburban shift in constitution and meanings, in these immigrant imaginations, the urban seems perpetually affiliated with social stagnation and decay—a space utilized for its financial offerings, a space to be stepped through but not stopped in. As affluent suburbanites turn their gaze toward the city, they increasingly see it through a racialized lens so that the city cannot be perceived as other than the abode of the struggling minorities assumed to be occupying it.

The relocation to select suburbs reifies this stagnant imagining of the city. In reality, the urban and suburban are in a perpetual state of flux, rendering weak the

¹⁵² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

constructed boundaries erected to divide and contain them; tropes of urban decay and urban crime are fully applicable in many suburbs. Even as people of color migrate into middle-class suburbs, the myth of the racial urban (versus the non-racial, white suburban) persists. If the very act of minority movement to the suburbs—in particular, Hispanic and African American migration outward—could dissolve racial myths and perceptions, it has not done so. Residents of middle- and upper middle-class suburbs, including South Asian residents, continue to uphold these imagined dichotomies. Buoyed, as they understand it, by the media’s perpetuation of racial narratives including coverage of incarceration, gang membership, or teen pregnancy rates, these suburbanites struggle to construct counter-narratives. Though immigrant interviewees expressed familiarity with and approval of at least some successes achieved by other minority groups, they nonetheless resorted to the convenience of American stereotypes, maintaining further ideological distance from the city than physical proximity would suggest.

Well-educated and well-compensated South Asian Americans who immigrated to Houston through professional status visas or for advanced education overwhelmingly chose, in line with others at their income level, to settle in middle-class urban and suburban areas. As reflected by the average median income of these years, families who lived in the city of Houston earned less than families in several surrounding suburbs. Many who could afford to do so moved out of the city, seeking “better” environments in which to raise their families. As engineers and physicians, they also followed the consumption patterns of other middle-class, professional Americans who were mostly white, by living in majority-white neighborhoods. That South Asian immigrants made the same choices as white Americans is unsurprising. However, interrogating these choices

illuminates the salience of racial hierarchies, the behaviors associated with racialized groups, and the role of race in middle-class aspirations. South Asians did not flock to the suburbs in general; they flocked to the suburbs in a specific, targeted manner, selecting neighborhoods that upheld these hierarchies and fulfilled their aspirations. When their particular neighborhood demographic dramatically changed, making space for working-class residents and more non-white residents, former middle-class residents—both white and Asian, departed. To be sure, depressed home prices and diminishing school quality factored into relocation decisions, as did the perception of increased crime and its association with newcomers to the neighborhood. This pattern of removing oneself and one's family from real and perceived dangers emerges first in southwest Houston in the late 1970s and again in Alief by the early 1990s. For all residents in these middle-class neighborhoods, family and home-ownership were key.

As much as home-ownership marked socio-economic status and sound investing, it also marked one's masculinity—that of responsible fatherhood doing right by investing in the family's future and providing a secure and permanent home for one's family: successful fathers purchase land to suggest that they care properly for their children and are invested fathers who prioritize family. Before the traditionally masculine responsibilities of yard work, car washing, and DIY home repair, male heads of family embrace the trope of the American Dream in which male homeownership is central. Immigrants and indeed, most Americans, aspire toward homeownership not only because of its place in the American Dream but also as part of a broader global capitalist logic. This logic reveres and relies upon consumption, of which house buying is the pinnacle

whether in India, Malaysia, or the U.K. In the U.S., owning a house—and especially one in the suburbs—announces that you have arrived.

Census data indicate that, like other Americans, Indian and Pakistani immigrants adopt a range of residential settlement options in both urban and suburban spaces. My research confirms the variety of choices employed; however, it also affirms the high concentrations of South Asian residence in key suburbs and interprets the implications of such concentrations. Their reasons for moving to certain suburbs both remained constant and changed during the forty years under study. At first, immigrants embraced the class prerogatives of others in their income group. As many more immigrants followed into these neighborhoods due to ethnic word-of-mouth networks, proximity to co-ethnics emerged as an appealing social dynamic. Still, this factor could not offset the effect of so many working-class residents of color eventually moving into the vicinity. Indian and Pakistani Americans closely associated neighborhood decline with the influx of African Americans. And as echoed by so many immigrants, once a neighborhood “went down,” then the “whole area has become more African American.”¹⁵³ That a neighborhood’s land and property value may have already decreased was less crucial than the different racialized groups that increasingly inhabited the neighborhood.

South Asian immigrants chose the next key suburb, less for school quality (by this time their children had grown up), than for sound economic investment and an idealized upper income suburban lifestyle, free from those residents who had brought the old neighborhood “down.” Even established residents of older suburbs, those who “stuck it out,” are moving in retirement age to be closer to co-ethnics. More recently, as so many

¹⁵³ P.D., interview, 5.

immigrants flock together to create a modern ethnic enclave within affluent suburbia, the continual influx of newer immigrants (those entering the U.S. after 1990) helps expand and create fresh iterations of “community,” complete with local political representation at multiple levels, extensive ethnic entrepreneurship, and public places of worship. Socially, many Indian and Pakistani immigrants have spoken about the hesitation their white neighbors exhibit toward establishing any meaningful relationships with them.

Neighborliness extends only so far as front-yard pleasantries, but most South Asian immigrants sense a lack of interest in fraternizing beyond the yard. Though South Asian immigrants define their own suburbia by both resisting and being denied membership in white suburban “community,” they nevertheless adhere to a profile of suburbanites in terms of socio-economic status, patterns of consumption, nuclear family structure, child-centeredness, and conservative-leaning politics.¹⁵⁴ This, in turn, reinforces the divide between city and suburb in terms of interest and concern.

The popular public narrative of Houston’s history proudly depicts the city’s peaceful process of desegregation as reflected in the film, *The Strange Demise of Jim Crow*. Indeed, compared to the wide scale public show of resistance and outright violence in cities such as Birmingham, Alabama and Oxford, Mississippi, the integration of Houston’s supermarkets, hotels, and drugstores occurred quietly in 1960. Houston’s business elite responded to Texas Southern University students’ “unrelenting campaign” of peaceful protest, especially through sit-ins; business elites “reluctantly” ushered in the

¹⁵⁴ Several interviewees allude to the social distance between themselves and non-South Asian neighbors. Simultaneously, they create community with co-ethnics both far and near. Nicolaides, “How Hell Moved from the City to the Suburbs,” in Kruse and Thomas, 80-98.

desegregation of public places.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the exploding of bombs just seven years prior at the house of the first black family to move into Houston's affluent and white Riverside Terrace neighborhood suggested an underlying level of hostility.¹⁵⁶ As a former president of a southwest Houston homeowners association advocated, "every all-white area in Houston that wishes to remain all-white will have a much better chance" if we "sit tight" in our neighborhoods and refrain from moving further out. Hostility could be expressed quietly and peacefully, as well.¹⁵⁷ By the 1970s and 1980s, my research shows that racial concerns articulated through the language of property and safety had not disappeared. As Kevin Kruse argues in his careful dismantling of Atlanta's "peaceful desegregation" myth, white flight "proved to be the most successful segregationist response to the moral demands of the civil rights movement."¹⁵⁸ In the case of South Asian immigrants, the term "brown flight" could be applied (though the category "brown" more popularly denotes Latino power).

While a statistical analysis of America's suburbs produces a diverse picture, some of these iconic suburbs captured by the term "suburbia" still exist. The key suburbs that Houston's early South Asians have chosen exhibited a greater degree of uniformity than suburbs at the aggregate level. In this regard, Houston's affluent suburbs and urban areas fit a racially and economically homogeneous mold. This is not to deny the heterogeneous

¹⁵⁵ Serbino Sandifer-Walker, "How TSU Students Changed History," *Houston Chronicle*, 28 February 2010. <http://www.chron.com/opinion/outlook/article/How-TSU-students-changed-history-1694527.php>

¹⁵⁶ Barry J. Kaplan, "Race, Income, and Ethnicity: Residential Change in a Houston Community, 1920-70," *Houston Review* 3 (Winter 1981).

¹⁵⁷ Char Miller and Heywood T. Sanders, *Urban Texas: Politics and Development* (College Station: Texas A&M Press- Southwestern Studies, 1990), 136.

¹⁵⁸ Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8.

character of suburbs in general.¹⁵⁹ Rather, it is to show that when wealthier Americans can opt to live in particular suburbs with a higher price point, they can and do. In effect, they purchase the exclusion of less affluent Americans residing within the city, who tend to be people of color—whether, for example, Southeast Asian, Latino, or African American. I do not argue that Americans with some degree of privilege choose to relegate others to lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder; I do, however, suggest that their choice to reside in exclusive areas exacerbates social distance, removing the problems of the urban poor to urban spaces. As one of Houston’s most expensive incorporated suburbs, upper income suburbanites such as those in Sugar Land, show little interest in the affairs of the city core. They resist public transit that would bring urban residents into their area for economic opportunity and they often pay taxes to their local government (not to the City of Houston). As wealth is concentrated in these upper income suburban enclaves, the ideological distance and disinterest for the affairs of the disadvantaged in the city thus contributes to the perpetuation of unequal access to quality education, ultimately perpetuating socio-economic inequality.

¹⁵⁹ See, for example, arguments in Kruse and Sugrue, *The New Suburban History*, “Introduction.”

Chapter Five

Racing Americans in a Racially Liberated America

In a brief conversation once with an eminent Asian Indian author I explained my project, and he nodded understandingly before asking, “so are we all irrevocably racist, because you know that we are.” No, I responded, some of us are racist, but more pertinent to this project, all of us are racialized. It is an inescapable reality of the postcolonial world that we emerge at birth into societies that racialize us.¹ Through social interactions, media representations, works of literature, and news coverage (to name but a few sources of our cultural identities), we internalize and become embedded in hierarchies of race, class, and gender. We cannot help but be so, though we may increase awareness of the ways in which race is articulated and subsequently advocate greater racial equity through measures large and small. Consequently, racialization processes inform our worldview—outlooks that changes over time within dynamic frameworks of race, class, and gender. Within that dynamism, however, certain constructs remain firmly embedded. That

¹ Omi and Winant define *racialization* as “an ideological, historically specific” process, “constructed from pre-existing ‘discursive’ elements and emerges from the struggles of competing political projects and ideas.” Furthermore, racialization “signif[ies] the extension of racial meaning to a previously unclassified relationship, social practice, or group.” Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 64.

whiteness has endured at the top of the racial hierarchy for over four hundred years reflects the concentration of power in white identity. Conversely, we must be ready to name the overt and subtle distinctions made in racially stratified societies as markedly racist; the very act of linking phenotype with behavior is racist, and yet we all do this. This is what it means to be embedded in a racialized society. As Richard Dyer notes, racist thoughts come to us “unbidden” when, for example, we find ourselves watching more closely a young black man as he walks past us to make sure he poses no threat or when a nonwhite driver suddenly pulls in front of us.² This is not to say that we are all racist but that it is impossible for us to exist outside of the societal structures that produce who we are. In response to that author’s query, labeling people racist answers nothing; in actuality, it is a question that demands deconstruction. The following chapter analyzes how Indian and Pakistani immigrants who arrived in Houston between 1960 and 1980 have made sense of race, racism, and racialization.

Though the formerly colonized in the United States and in the Indian Subcontinent formally broke the yoke of their colonizers decades ago through the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and Indian Independence in 1947, respectively, the roots of domination and exploitation grown thick over hundreds of years have taken time to fully thin out. In the United States, the far-reaching legacies of slavery, failed Reconstruction, exclusion, and segregation linger. In terms of opportunities, African Americans in the twenty-first century continue to struggle disproportionately as compared to their often-distant white neighbors. For example, the Pew Research Center finds that in response to the housing market collapse, the median wealth of African American households

² Richard Dyer, *White* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 7.

decreased by 53 percent versus just 16 percent for all white households between 2005 and 2009.³ Latinos also suffered major losses in terms of 66 percent of their median wealth. Meanwhile Asian Americans and Latinos are still regarded as “forever foreigners” by other Americans, despite the existence of migration waves since the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ Due, in part, to a long history of the racialization of nonwhite labor—be they the enslaved, “coolies,” or “wetbacks”—the assignation of racial meanings to America’s many Others has perpetuated negative racial stereotypes. Though mid 1960s legislation such as the Civil Rights Act that aimed to universalize voting privileges and abolish segregation and the Immigration Act that widened eligibility for entry into the U.S. have corrected gross injustices, the rights granted through their passage have only nominally changed the ideologies attached to categories of race. The meanings attached to white, black, Asian, and Latino, for example, remain robust. That immigrants settle in the United States and readily participate in these discourses both ideologically and physically, suggests a number of determinants, the first of which is the global circulation of racial hierarchies since the age of European expansion. The ordering of groups of people is both familiar and unfamiliar to immigrants, insofar as any process of racialization is both global and local. Second, though race is socially constructed, the benefits and drawbacks attached to specific racial identities are very real, even for

³ Rakesh Kochhar, Richard Fry, and Paul Taylor, “Wealth Gap Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics,” (Pew Research Center Publications: 26 July 2011): 1.

⁴ On the designation of “foreigner,” see Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999); In regards to nineteenth-century Asian immigration, see the following monographs: Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming Of Gold, Dreaming Of Home: Transnationalism And Migration Between The United States And South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). Broad syntheses include: Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989).

immigrants of color.⁵ Barbara Fields demonstrates that “race” was a product of capitalist expansion in the early seventeenth century, erected and nurtured with cost-benefit in mind, decades after the arrival of the first African slaves in North America.⁶ In addition, W.E.B. Du Bois, Pierre Bourdieu, and David Roediger, among others, suggest that status benefits accrue to whites in particular and generally to those who distance themselves from blacks, both physically and ideologically.⁷ These psychological “wages of whiteness” or cultural capital (which often lead to opportunities for social mobility) provide clear incentive to participate in processes of racialization, though, in truth, participation is not so much a choice as an obligation, evident in everyday decision-making such as friendship, residence, romantic partners, and the consumption of products. Finally, as noted previously, the system of racialization in the U.S. is, as elsewhere, deep-rooted and widespread.

The United States is deeply invested in racialization, with both a long and modern history of racial subordination, violence, and exclusion. Racial ideas make up the fabric of national identity, so much so that established citizens and newcomers alike internalize the cultural iconography and discourse of whiteness, blackness, foreign-ness, and even “American-ness.” Though the resulting worldview is always subject to change, even change is essentialized, as evidenced, for example, by the shifting perceptions of Native

⁵ See, for example, *Racism without Racists 3rd Ed.*, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010).

⁶ Barbara Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,” *New Left Review* 181 (May/June 1990).

⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1965); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique Of The Judgement Of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

Americans from “noble savage” to later, just “savage.”⁸ Similarly, Asian Americans once endured nativist epithets of laziness and filth, but by the 1970s they were hailed as a model minority. Both representations are problematic in their own way and in the same way. Each of these descriptors sustains the reification of racial essences; the essence changes but the existence of an essence does not.

As scholars of ethnic studies have noted, the “essence” of “American” is popularly imagined as white and middle class. Certainly, my interviewees’ indirect and direct comments verify this. For example, P.D. remembers that one of his earliest apartment residences in 1975 “was a pretty nice apartment complex, pretty upscale for that time, very safe. There were lots of tennis courts, swimming pools and there were students, a few students but there were a lot of Americans that lived there. So it was, in that sense, more Americans lived there than now. Probably because it has become a bit run down now but at that time it was a pretty nice complex.”⁹ When another interviewee made a similar passing reference and was probed for clarification, he confirmed that by “American” he meant “white.”¹⁰ “White” is thus accessed through a number of signifiers, in addition to “American.” “professional,” “white-collar,” “educated” and “middle-class” all allude to whites in a comprehensive identity that immigrants deemed (and continue to deem) normative. Whites need not be explicitly mentioned by name because “whiteness both names and critiques hegemonic beliefs and practices that designate white people as

⁸ Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁹ P.D., interview by author, 26 August 2011 [M.D. Anderson Library, Special Collections, University of Houston (MDA)], 13.

¹⁰ V.R.B., interview by author, 28 August 2011 (MDA), 27.

‘normal’ and racially ‘unmarked.’”¹¹ Undoubtedly, in the 1960s and 1970s, whites comprised the vast majority of professional, educated, middle-class Americans. What is notable is the persistence of these signifiers as “white” in spite of a growing African American, Latino, and obviously Asian American middle-class, especially after 1965. If these two groups do not evoke notions of class ascendancy, education, and occupational attainment, what do they evoke? At the common level, black and brown people are associated with criminality, laziness, loose moral values, and lack of investment in the institution of “family,” and they are mostly peripheral to an American identity. In an age when open racism defies social norms and therefore is challenging to pinpoint, the existence of racist stereotypes among any immigrant group reveals not just what immigrants thought before migration but what they learned to think through the racialization process in *this* country.¹² In other words, it reveals the racial thinking of the host nation, in this case, the United States.

Often, in the course of interviewing, I have asked very open-ended questions that allowed interviewees to pursue answers in any way they chose. It continued to surprise me that interviewees took answers in a racial direction when they had no prompting to do so. That this happened fairly frequently establishes the primacy of race even when individuals categorically deny its relevance. By way of example, in 1977 M.K. and his wife, Bonnie, purchased their first home in Alief. The neighborhood was only about ten years old, and the couple quickly selected a house. M.K. says he does not regret the purchase but shakes his head as he says that the neighborhood has gone “down a little

¹¹ Steve Garner, *Whiteness: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

¹² The issue of how South Asian immigrant subjectivities informed their engagement with racialization (i.e. how the racial views of India or Pakistan affected their view of race) is discussed in another chapter.

bit.”¹³ When asked what he means specifically, he says that it used to be “almost 100 percent white,” though he quickly points out that “*it* was not a question to me at that time.” Though the “it” is vague, he seems to mean that the racial composition of the neighborhood was a non-factor in their decision. “We just were impressed with the house and our demands were nothing.” I probed further, asking if there was a demographic shift from elderly residents to younger ones, to which M.K. responded, “I would say that [it’s] 70 percent Hispanic now and about 10 percent African American, and the rest, some whites and some Chinese and so on.” The major shift in his Alief neighborhood was framed primarily in terms of race. M.K. overlooks the changing class makeup of the residents, and returns at will to race as the main change. Ultimately he links neighborhood racial diversification to long-decreasing, now-stabilizing property values. After mentioning the percentage of different racial and ethnic groups, he says that “the property had gone down. Now it seems to be stabilizing but it’s a little bit different now.”¹⁴ R.P., an immigrant from Bihar, India, explained, “so, it used to be a good area, close to town and everything. It has become... people are going farther and farther.”¹⁵ Immigrants struggle to articulate thoughts of a racial nature. They frequently pause and jump to new beginnings, in order to avoid naming race as a determinant.

As explained in the introduction, many people find the topic of race uncomfortable to discuss. Because of the often-evasive nature of these conversations, the omissions are as revealing as the direct signification of race. Overall, I found that

¹³ M.K., interview by author, 5 September 2011 (MDA), 18-19.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ R.P., interview by author, 15 November 2011 [South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA)], 39.

interviewees only fleetingly referred to Latino Americans, instead formulating their race discussions around a dichotomy of blackness and whiteness. Indian immigrant P.M. explained that prior to migrating, he knew only that Mexico was in proximity of Texas but beyond that, he was “not too familiar with the [Hispanic] culture or anything along that line at that time.”¹⁶ Even as a graduate student in Houston, his interactions with Latinos were limited to just seeing them while shopping.¹⁷ Only after moving away from Houston to Corpus Christi in 1984 did P.M. expand the frequency and nature of his interactions with Latinos. Still, the relative invisibility of Latinos in South Asian immigrant racial perceptions indicates that African Americans and whites embody the extreme limits of racial hierarchies. To immigrants, Latinos occupy a middle ground, seen neither as threatening as the imagined black nor the working-class white. As a result, based on the interviewees’ own racial language, much of the following discussion on racial categories and their meanings focuses on African Americans, whites, and Asian Americans.

In the public imagination, African Americans inhabit a singular space—a space apart. That space holds little room for hard-won accomplishments by African Americans in employment and education. Instead it reifies stereotypical images—racist images—and perpetuates them regardless of changes on the ground. That so many African Americans defy the stereotypes—have always defied the stereotypes, and like other Americans, overcome barriers to achieve—has had little impact on the imagined African American. In the following passages, I examine how immigrants from Indian and Pakistan in the 1960s and 1970s made racial sense of their new societies. Deconstructing the

¹⁶ P.M., interview by author, 8 October 2011 (MDA), 8

¹⁷ Ibid., 15.

epistemological process, that is, the ordering of new knowledge, exposes ideas prevalent in American and southern society at the time of arrival. Memories at significant signposts in our lives, such as when migrating to another country, are often clearer than the blurs of time that are the intervals in between. As such, by interrogating immigrant memories around the months of arrival and movement to new residences, we can isolate ideas of race that may be far more difficult to isolate for native residents during the same time period. Thus, immigrant perceptions allow us to trace the impact that passage of the Civil Rights Act and the demise of Jim Crow had on ideas about African Americans and whites—ideas of whiteness and blackness.

Prior to emigration from the Subcontinent, South Asians were at least rudimentarily familiar with African American experiences in the United States. Through radio and print media, and school, they learned about “race, the segregation of schools. We had heard about Martin Luther King. So we knew there were issues with race, with blacks and whites [and] there was a small minority of blacks and the majority were whites.”¹⁸ Through the news media and other forms of print media, future immigrants believed that they became “completely aware of [the] American way of life [and] American culture.”¹⁹ Also, some “had heard about things like the KKK and other [related matters] from reading books.”²⁰ The Indian press covered the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and V.K. recalled that, before emigrating from India, she had admired Kennedy as a hero.²¹ During the early 1960s, when covering the American civil rights

¹⁸ P.D., interview, 7.

¹⁹ S.K. and V.K., interview by author, 16 August 2011 (MDA), 46.

²⁰ P.M., interview, 9.

²¹ S.K. and V.K., interview, 46.

movement, the Indian press often drew favorable comparisons between Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. King's blackness was not a concern "because his talks were so noble... and he was really advanced and free thinking and he used to care for poor people."²² For South Asians, the focus on "non violence and protests without violence... really brought to light the problems the African Americans had faced here."²³ For the middle-class Indian public, radio and newspapers located a "common theme" between the efforts of Gandhi and King, since Gandhi "believed in non violence and protests without violence."²⁴ The Indian media situated King's civil rights struggle in a Gandhian discourse, immediately accessible to Indians. Through this discourse, even young Indians such as P.D., who was seventeen when King died in 1968, learned "about how deep-rooted [discrimination] was until he [King] brought it to light."²⁵

South Asian immigrant perceptions of African Americans seem to have shifted and become increasingly complex over time. In 1974 P.M. lived in apartments in the MacGregor area near the University of Houston. He described his formative impressions of African Americans:

We didn't have any burglaries in our apartment. I had heard of some around that area and I did not want to come across them [African Americans] but at that time I was afraid of blacks until I kind of got to know them a little bit better. That was

²² Ibid.

²³ P.D., interview, 24.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

a black community in that area, quite a large community over there *so there were burglaries there*. Judging from the TV reports and other things there were, you know, mostly blacks that were caught with these burglaries but again this— *I just took it as a common fact of life*—“this was a part of life,” kind of a thing. It didn’t bother me very much.²⁶ [Emphasis mine]

P.M. easily accepted the idea that in a black neighborhood, crime would occur because, as he understood it, blacks commit crimes. Not once did P.M. recognize that the neighborhood was, importantly, low-income. Low-income areas regardless of racial composition have higher rates of crime than do affluent areas, as we will be discussed further in this chapter. In line with racial ideologies of that time (that also reach into the present), P.M. believed that the tendency toward crime harkened back to race, not class. For negatively racialized peoples, shortcomings (in this case, crime) of any subset within the group define the whole group, while for dominant racial groups, no individual’s failings are said to represent the whole. As Peggy McIntosh emphasizes, unlike for blacks, whiteness means that members are “never asked to speak for all the people of [one’s] racial group,” and that if a white person has “low credibility,” his “race is not the problem.”²⁷

Several things reinforced P.M.’s initial fear of blacks. First, crime in his low-income neighborhood led him to generally associate crime with blacks. Second, media focus on this particular type of crime reinforced the fear. Immigrants felt that they

²⁶ P.M., interview, 29.

²⁷ Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege” in *Critical Whiteness Studies* by Delgado and Stefancic (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1997), 291.

were more likely to become victims of personal crimes (i.e. crimes against the body), rather than fraud, embezzlement, and other white-collar crimes. In addition, burglary, theft, and breaking and entering—the fears voiced by immigrants as they sought safer neighborhoods— carried the risk of bodily injury to the victim, whether in one’s own home or on the street.²⁸ Thus, immigrants express a heightened sense of concern regarding crime that could be potentially injurious to their physical well-being. In the formation of a new *habitus*, a way of seeing one’s world—a world that was in some ways uniquely southern and simultaneously metropolitan and American —this concern was linked to African Americans. In building the necessary schema that informed emerging truths for South Asian immigrants and that decoded the hierarchical landscape, South Asian immigrants manifested already pervasive fears circulated by word-of-mouth networks and television and news media. In heavily professionalized and white-majority neighborhoods, immigrants such as P.M. affirmed that “there was no fear of break-ins or anything like that,” though “somebody could have easily.”²⁹

That this framework was established even prior to arrival in Houston is evidenced by the experience of V.R.B. in New York. Having moved directly there from Punjab, India, in 1970, V.R.B. related the following story:

I was walking down the street in New York. It was dusk. It was in the evening after hours between when the sun is setting so *the complexion is darker...*I

²⁸ Black’s Law Dictionary distinguishes between these three terms, the former involving breaking into a house at night with intention to commit a felony, the latter in the day, and the middle term denoting taking someone’s belongings. See <http://blackslawdictionary.org/> accessed February 14, 2013.

²⁹ P.M., interview, 29.

remember walking in Queens on a street to try to go to my house and I think I lost my way... This is in my first 12 months, so now I'm trying to ask somebody and they thought I'm going to go and *attack or mug* somebody."³⁰ [Emphasis mine]

The pedestrian hurried along, refusing to answer V.R.B., indicating, in V.R.B.'s view, that the pedestrian was concerned for his safety. This signaled to V.R.B. that men with dark complexions—men other than himself— could not be trusted. He decided then that he ought to seek a brightly lit area so that others might more easily distinguish between a dark-skinned Indian immigrant and other, dangerous “dark-skinned” pedestrians. He offered the incident in response to my question, “Did anyone ever treat you badly on the basis of your being a foreigner?” The short answer to my question was that he had been treated “not badly, but differently.”³¹ He understood the pedestrian's fear because, as he understood it, it was legitimate. A lone black man walking down the street constituted a threat. Philosopher George Yancy has written about the experience of being that black man on the street. He writes of being

unable to stop white women from tightening the hold of their purses as I walk by, unable to stop white women from crossing to the other side of the street once they have seen me walking in their direction, unable to stop white men from looking several times over their shoulders as I walk behind them minding my own

³⁰ V.R.B., interview, 9-10. Emphasis mine.

³¹ Ibid.

business.... The depiction of the Black body as the quintessence of *evil* has endured across historical time and space.³²

V.R.B. wants it to be clear. He is not that black man. Like his experiences, he is not “bad,” just “different.”

More recently, South Asian Americans have expressed alarm over the influx of Louisianans in the wake of the Hurricane Katrina. Referring to them as “Katrina refugees,” these immigrants link the presence of the evacuees to major spikes in crime and sharp declines in housing value. Though they have not personally experienced any breach of safety, South Asian residents receive regular updates from their homeowners associations.³³ These updates combined with newspaper articles, local news coverage, and rumor serve to create a heightened sense of danger and a lens through which to view their neighborhood. Long before Katrina, according to a study conducted in 1976, roughly 75 percent of respondents worried about becoming victims of crime.³⁴ The media played a significant role in the dissemination of crime news, with fully 50 percent of all local news stories related to crime and justice (i.e. individual crimes, police/security, judiciary, etc.), with the remaining 50 percent addressing education, government, disasters, and other topics. In addition, 33 percent of all television programming were crime television dramas. Doris A. Graber, the author of the study, concludes that the heightened awareness and fears kindled by excessive media attention to crime-related

³² George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), *xix-xx*.

³³ S.M., interview by author, 21 September 2011 (MDA), 45.

³⁴ Doris A. Graber, *Crime News and the Public* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), *xv*.

stories foster “risk-avoidance behavior,” including avoidance of juveniles or racial minorities or avoidance of certain areas.³⁵ Another study conducted in 1996 – 1997 found that stories depicting violent crime comprised 83 percent of all local news stories on crime.³⁶ While the media cannot be held wholly responsible for the perpetration of racist stereotypes, its role is, nevertheless, substantial. Increasingly, racial imagery is included in crime coverage, and when focused so heavily on violent crime, distorts the reality of crime.³⁷ Indeed, this distortion is apparent in the racial perceptions of South Asian immigrants.

The association between black skin and danger is not a uniquely southern phenomenon. As bell hooks states in her book, *Black Looks*, white culture has narrowly portrayed black masculinity as “dangerous” and “violent.”³⁸ By the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, black men were represented as “lazy and shiftless,” interested only in drinking and lounging.³⁹ She continues, “Such stereotypes were an effective way for white racists to erase the significance of black male labor from public consciousness.” These stereotypes, as hooks notes, “are still evoked today.” Though she points out that the stereotypes did not even remotely fit the men who populated the “segregated southern black community” of her upbringing, they are stereotypes that have “shaped”

³⁵ Graber, *Crime News and the Public*, xvi.

³⁶ Franklin D Gilliam Jr. and Shanto Iyengar, “Prime suspects: The influence of local television news on the viewing public,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 44, no. 3 (July 2000): p 562.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 89-90.

³⁹ Ibid., 90.

“contemporary black men.”⁴⁰ Others have also commented on the phenomenon of contemporary young black men proudly embracing an image intentionally far removed from that of the white majority as a way of asserting their sense of personhood.⁴¹ Beverly D. Tatum writes that “the all too familiar media image of a young Black man with his hands cuffed behind his back, arrested for a violent crime, has primed many to view young Black men with suspicion and fear.”⁴²

Especially after the 1970s, however, as sociologists William Julius Wilson and Douglas Massey have observed, rates of crime *are* much higher among the young, underprivileged, African American, male population than other segments of the American population.⁴³ Crime correlates inversely to socioeconomic status (SES), since research indicates that at higher SES, crime rates are low, regardless of race.⁴⁴ Massey elaborates that unlike poverty that is diffused across urban areas, as is the case for white Americans, poverty for African Americans is concentrated in increasingly visible, *segregated* areas. “Because segregation concentrates disadvantage,” poor black neighborhoods were rapidly transformed after the 1970s into welfare-dependent, female-headed households. Indeed, they became havens for the production of high crime, dilapidated property, fatality, and poor educational performance.⁴⁵ Neighborhoods with

⁴⁰ Ibid., 88-89.

⁴¹ Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

⁴² Ibid., 58.

⁴³ Douglas Massey, “American Apartheid” in *Crime and Inequality* by eds. Hagan and Peterson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 21, 15.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁵ Hagan and Peterson, *Crime and Inequality*, 351.

or near concentrations of poor African Americans exhibit elevated levels of violent crime, such as homicide.⁴⁶ I do not argue against the reality of this lived experience for the most disadvantaged of African Americans. Rather, these phenomena occur not due to any biological/racial predisposition, but rather, as a result of “race-linked inequalities” such as highly concentrated residential segregation and joblessness that for disadvantaged African Americans “generate diffuse feelings of injustice, hostility, and aggression.”⁴⁷

As South Asians reflect back on their early years in the U.S., two key perceptions emerge: that of the nice, “normal” black person and conversely, the black criminal. When he was a new immigrant in the 1970s, S.K. recalled that African Americans were not “rough” with him. He had some Spanish-speaking and African American neighbors, “but,” he pointed out, they were “family people” and were “polite and nice.”⁴⁸ Female Indian immigrant, V.A., offered that back in the ’70s, people were different but “everything changes. When my daughter was born, even the black nurses were very nice, at that time, you know.”⁴⁹ Their statements suggest a shift in opinions about African Americans though such racial ideas are “a product of the imaginers rather than the imagined.”⁵⁰ It seems not that African Americans have changed—that is, become the opposite of the “nice” personalities that they once held— but that as immigrants become more aware of racial constructions and become more embedded and invested in systems

⁴⁶ Massey, “American Apartheid,” 20, 24.

⁴⁷ Hagan and Peterson, *Crime and Inequality*, 34-35.

⁴⁸ S.K. and V.K., interview, 40.

⁴⁹ A.S.A., interview by author, 5 September 2011 (MDA), 35.

⁵⁰ Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation*, 5.

of racialization, their own ideas about African Americans as a group have come to conform more closely to conventional, dominant, white definitions of blackness.

If South Asian Americans have minimized socialization with other Americans, and of those, have further reduced social interaction with African Americans, they nevertheless have interacted at some level. As Houston's population is so racially diverse, one immigrant, V.R.B., asked, "how could you not integrate?"⁵¹ He clarified that such integration was not voluntary but structural: "We didn't decide to integrate with the black people...Seventy percent of the city workforce is black." Later in the conversation, V.R.B. admitted that South Asians collectively remained hesitant about intermingling with African Americans, but he, personally, had shown the opposite tendency. "I have decided to integrate. I have decided to be very indiscriminatory [*sic*] in my mind." Yet V.R.B. noted a degree of possible tension or reticence on the part of African Americans: "They may think that we invaded their jobs, you know. They may think that we have creative differences or something. I don't know what they are thinking."⁵² V.R.B. first posits the idea that Houstonians, as a diverse community, were fully integrated. The mere fact of residence in a diverse metropolis implied integrated socialization to V.R.B. Still, he holds African Americans as somehow responsible for the social barriers erected by South Asians who are, as he reveals, unwilling to befriend African Americans.

Socioeconomic status signified specific levels of danger, revealing an embedded system of race and class, not just in the urban South but throughout the United States. S.K. and V.K. moved from an apartment in an upper-middle class Spring Branch

⁵¹ V.R.B., interview, 31.

⁵² Ibid.

neighborhood to Stafford, a southwesterly suburb of Houston in 1980. Their daughter attended Alief ISD schools, though they chose the neighborhood for other reasons in addition to “good” schools. S.K. noted that, as a foreigner, he felt that his suburban, white, middle-class neighborhood would shelter him from discrimination and provide him with a welcome space. His neighbors were “middle-class” and white, from “good families.”⁵³ He explained that due to high rent brackets, “poor people” could not afford to live in his new area. He continued, “Outside there were poor people. I didn’t say black or anything. Mexican or anyway, they are really poor, they can’t afford to live there.” Those who would discriminate against him were “outside” his neighborhood; they were poor, in particular blacks and Mexicans. However, S.K. mentioned earlier that when he had first arrived in Houston in 1976, he had encountered no problems with African Americans. They were “friendly.”⁵⁴ Speaking generally about discrimination against South Asians, S.K. noted that he felt greater discrimination from working-class whites than working-class laborers of other races. When “somebody’s doing air conditioning work, somebody’s doing roofing work, when you call them and you talk to them, some professionals, they are real American workers but they are rough.”⁵⁵ As noted earlier, when used as the single descriptor, “American” refers to white Americans. While South Asians live, socialize, and educate their children in spaces separate from large populations of African Americans and Latinos, they admit that their direct interactions

⁵³ S.K. and V.K., interview, 18.

⁵⁴ S.K. and V.K., interview.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 41.

with working-class members of these same groups have been positive. As S.K. continues, “All non-American workers or laborers, they are always nice, they are polite.”⁵⁶

At some point, his views had changed to seeing African Americans and Latinos as threatening. Whereas previously, he had considered white-collar employees at his workplace as “rough” and closed-minded, later he believed that those with less wealth were more discriminatory. S.K. insisted that “people are very friendly and professional” and that he did not cross paths with “uneducated and unprofessional” folks.⁵⁷ M.A.S., a Pakistani immigrant, endorsed this view. At work, “people were very concerned, very cooperative,” but “you always find somebody here or there, you know, mostly uneducated— they will make fun of you sometimes. But [with] educated people, [I] probably never had any problem.”⁵⁸ V.A.K.’s impression concurred with S.K.’s when he suggested that “if the price of entry is higher, then you are going to attract the people in the middle class or the upper-middle class more than the lower income groups. That’s not to say that that’s where all the problems are but, you know, it does happen for whatever reason.”⁵⁹ V.A.K., like other immigrants and Americans, equated low income with crime and other social problems. During his graduate student years, P.M. moved from a majority African American to a majority white neighborhood and observed that because the latter area was “mostly professional people,” he felt safer.⁶⁰ P.D. spoke of the last two or three years that he lived in an unstable neighborhood: “We found that the makeup had

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ M.A.S., interview by author, 17 July 2007 (MDA), 21-2.

⁵⁹ V.A.K., interview by author, 17 August 2011 (MDA), 7

⁶⁰ P.M., 31.

changed because of the apartment complexes nearby which were upscale apartments at one time. But then the city took them over and made them into low-cost housing and a bus route also came in so all kinds of unruly elements move in. So every night we would hear police sirens, ambulances back and forth, and shooting and all. So we didn't want to have our child grow up in that.”⁶¹

Memoirs written by Indian visitors to the United States, though predating the period under study, reveal similar notions of the intersection of race and class. Visiting New York and a handful of cities in the U.S. in 1959, Indian astrologist Bangalore Venkata Raman wrote in his memoir, *A Hindu in America*, that Harlem “represents the highest and the lowest status attained by the Negroes in North of the U.S.A.”⁶² He observed that there were “some successful Negroes who live with dignity” but “lower-class Negroes” exhibit “vice, disease, [and] delinquency.”⁶³ Indeed, he insisted that “our ‘untouchables’ lead more contented and happy life.”⁶⁴ For Raman, part of that alleged state of contentment and happiness among the untouchables was bound to fiercely nationalistic notions of India’s timeless, “ancient civilization and culture” built on a “strong and stable cultural unity.”⁶⁵ It is nonetheless interesting that throughout the memoir, no association of “lower-class” whites with delinquency was made. The base assertion regarding poor blacks is not about their poverty but their blackness as

⁶¹ P.D., interview, 27.

⁶² Bangalore Venkata Raman, *A Hindu in America* (“Sri Rajeswari,” Bangalore: Raman Publications, 1969), 65-66.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

normatively delinquent, though there are “some” exceptional black individuals. Rather, Jewish, Italian, and Chinese residents of Lower East Side slums, on the other hand, live in “congested streets” and are described as “underprivileged,” both decidedly structural descriptors in opposition to embodied terms such as “disease” and “vice.”⁶⁶ Nor is the affluent, white Upper East Side noted for any negative descriptors; it is a space inhabited by “fashion” and “wealth.”⁶⁷

Indian and Pakistani immigrants constructed meanings of race and class through their neighborhoods, in their social networks, through their consumption of media forms, and also in their workplaces. In the early 1970s, when many South Asian immigrant men commenced careers in predominantly engineering companies, they found a work force comprised almost entirely of white Americans. Looking back, immigrants offer mixed accounts of their experiences. P.D. reflected that “most people in the work place are pretty professional and if you did a good job they liked you. If you didn’t then you were out, so there was [*sic*] no two ways about it.”⁶⁸ But he also noted that one’s treatment at work was heavily impacted by the class status of co-workers. He mused that “we were always dealing with white-collar workers, never with the blue-collar [workers].” With the latter group, concerns such as “you’re taking over my job!” may have been more prevalent.⁶⁹ He found professional, white-collar employees more tolerant and accepting than he imagined blue-collar employees might have been. Another immigrant ascribed

⁶⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ P.D., interview, 15.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

values such as “good families,” “good training,” and “good students” to the middle class.⁷⁰

When V.K. and S.K. moved to Houston in 1976, S.K. noticed that at the engineering company where he worked, some professional white employees wore what he could only describe as “a tie, with some kind of a...shoe lace and then shell.”⁷¹ S.K. perceived the donning of bolo ties as a uniquely Texan attire but more importantly, as symbolic of parochialism. S.K. explained that choosing to wear what he perceived as unprofessional attire to work showed that Houstonians (and Texans, generally) “were not ready to accept the modern world,” referring to the ascendancy of the conventional, standardized Wall Street suit as a marker of professionalism and thus, modernity.⁷² The wearing of bolos, however insignificant as a real marker of “progress,” nevertheless validated, for S.K., his belief that Texas was a place resistant to diversity; the bolo ties had been worn by individuals who had expressed intolerance toward him—intolerance being another mark of Texan backwardness in an otherwise generally progressive nation.

S.K.’s wife, V.K., suggested that perhaps Houstonians “didn’t have that much culture at that time,” culture being an abridgement of “high culture” and so, a euphemism for class.⁷³ Having spent the better part of the previous decade in New York City, V.K. used New York as a barometer for assessing refinement, and by comparison she judged Houston a backwater. By this barometer, New York represented the progressive nation (apart from Texas) in what V.K. perceived as a uniform, unmarked, middle-class

⁷⁰ S.K. and V.K., interview, 17-18.

⁷¹ Ibid., 13.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ S.K. and V.K., interview, 13.

whiteness, and what she articulated as “culture.” S.K. concluded that in the 1970s, Houston “was a little behind the modern thing. Now it’s changed.”⁷⁴

The entanglement of modernity and whiteness sometimes led South Asians to treat white Americans preferentially. Frantz Fanon discusses the phenomenon as a relic of colonial mentality, when colonized intellectuals accepted the “essential qualities of the West” as ideal.⁷⁵ In the postcolonial era, some continued to favor those of European descent. V.A.K. recalled an incident from the early 1980s, while dining at an Indian restaurant:

Now things have changed quite a bit, but I remember that we had gone to an Indian restaurant. There was an American couple waiting in line and the Indian guy that was also waiting in line or something, he was all over the American couple,⁷⁵ talking about Indian food and you know, going over there and explaining to them and all that. He was probably ignoring his wife while he was trying to do all this. I just... these things, these events or these incidents kind of stick out and say, ‘Okay there is something wrong here.’ Even back then some of the restaurant owners would do the same thing. You know if there are Americans they would give them preferential treatment. If it’s Indian customers or Pakistani customers, they are like second class citizens.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), 46. INSERT: *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.93. See Thomas Ranuga review/article.

⁷⁶ V.A.K., interview, 17-18.

V.A.K., as well as other postcolonial South Asians, had already surpassed the “moment he realizes his humanity”—that he knows he is not simply a part of the “black, brown, and yellow masses.”⁷⁷ V.A.K. explained that some South Asians allowed their “perceptions [and] mental makeup biases” to dictate their treatment of co-ethnics, rather than “letting their conscience drive what they need to do.”⁷⁸ They believed that “somehow the Caucasians were a better race than anybody else.”⁷⁹ Immigrant V.R.B. corroborated this:

There is a white superiority [that] continues mentally. Black inferiority continues mentally. Simple... There is a... we grew up with white superiority when... before we came here. My parents, right? We were ruled by Britishers, right? The white superiority continued. Until my father died, [the] white man is superior in his mind. Simple. He didn't grow out of it. I'm trying to grow out of it. My son has grown out of it.⁸⁰

V.R.B. felt that his father and by extension, his parents' generation held white Britishers in high regard because of their whiteness. For V.R.B., the “simple” passing of time has remedied colonial subjects' “white superiority” complex, and though he still experiences traces of it, his children and subsequent generations have no such complex. Conversely, in this colonial racial hierarchy, blacks (which can mean those of African descent but just

⁷⁷ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 43.

⁷⁸ V.A.K., interview, 18.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁸⁰ V.R.B., interview, 30-1.

as likely, all nonwhite colonial subjects) occupy a low station, not only in the eyes of whites who created the system but apparently, in their own eyes as well. V.R.B. recognizes the need to transcend what Frantz Fanon would term the “pathology” of the “colonized subject.”⁸¹

He also makes an explicit connection between the racial hierarchies in place in British India and those in the modern-day United States. His statement above was in response to a question about a recent Indian-African American mixed-race marriage. In explaining why this couple has chosen to leave the “Indian community,” V.R.B. raised the issue of historical race perceptions in the Subcontinent. Scholars, including Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, also write of the global circulation of racial discourses in the late imperial era and “chart the spread of ‘whiteness’ as a transnational form or racial identification.”⁸²

Being implicated in racialization processes means that not only does one impose racialized discourses on others but that, as a person of color, one also serves as the object of racialized discourses. In other words, while South Asians have projected racial meanings onto others, they have simultaneously been subjected to prejudice and discrimination themselves. There are multiple, socially located gazes—one that South Asians turn toward whites, another toward blacks, another that whites focus on immigrants, and so on. The following section examines South Asian immigrant experiences as racialized objects. Scholar Alice McIntyre further notes that for white Americans, discussing race “generates uncomfortable silences, forms of resistance,

⁸¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

⁸² Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

degrees of hostility, and a host of other responses that many of us would prefer to avoid.”⁸³ Similarly, most South Asian immigrants (and indeed, many other Americans) do not speak directly about their racial assumptions either. In addition, most South Asian immigrants do not speak of their experiences of having been targets of racism, requiring scholars to conduct close textual analyses of immigrants’ oral narratives. Close readings uncover the semantics utilized by immigrants from South Asia to articulate and obfuscate their treatment as foreigners of color. The hesitation to name racial practices is a part of learned racial behavior. For middle-class Americans, race is not spoken of in “polite company,” as exemplified by V.R.B.’s statement that “in general, it has been a pleasant experience to immigrate.”⁸⁴ V.R.B.’s inclusion of the prefix, “in general” alerts us to the possibility of discrimination in his experience. Most immigrants with whom I spoke, including V.R.B., preferred to frame their narrative in terms of the generality of harmony over the specificity of hostility.

The interview itself is operative here. First, most interviewees met me for the first time during these interviews. As an academic researcher newly engaging with them, I fell solidly in the category of “polite company.” Also, since the interviews were taped and intended for public, archival access, respondents were less likely to openly share all of their thoughts on clearly controversial issues. There is no question that this public aspect of creating oral history narratives informs the final product. As is also the case with diaries or journals, there is a reverse-voyeurism at work here since the writer is always aware of the eventual possibility or even likelihood that their words will be read by others

⁸³ Alice McIntyre, *Making Meaning of Whiteness: Exploring Racial Identity with White Teachers* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), quoted in *Black Bodies, White Gazes* by George Yancy (2008), 45.

⁸⁴ V.R.B., interview, 32.

either during or after their lifetimes.⁸⁵ This awareness of the public gaze, whether in interviews, diaries, or letters, provides a framework within which these narratives are produced. As a result, the researcher must engage in a close textual reading of the interview, analyzing what might otherwise be easily overlooked: the pauses, word searches, delicate couching of issues, coded language. All of this is crucial in determining the significance of race in the lives of immigrants.

When asked to reflect on any racially discriminatory incidents in his life as an immigrant, P.D. shared the following:

Well, there were only *one or two incidents that I can remember, just one I think.*

There was one guy who was, maybe, he was our... was he H.R. or no he was a controller, financial controller. *He...I found that he was a little bit racial* in his biases but that was the only interaction I had with race. *I had no racial experiences of that type at all.*⁸⁶

P.D.'s train of thought, his progression between ideas, and the language employed to express himself reveal a buffering strategy that diminishes race as a salient factor in his narrative. First, P.D. creates distance between the incident he describes and definite racial indictment when he says "that I can remember" and "I found that he was." Both of these phrases suggest hesitation on P.D.'s part to directly name racist practices. P.D. seems to feel too uncomfortable to definitively state that "there were two incidents" or that "he

⁸⁵ Sharmila Sreekumar, *Scripting Lives: Narratives Of 'Dominant Women' In Kerala* (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2009).

⁸⁶ P.D., interview, 15.

was racial,” period. Next, P.D. softens the ugliness of racism by qualifying this co-worker’s racist behavior as only “a little bit” racial. While the behavior in question may indeed have been relatively minor, P.D.’s trivialization of racist behavior shows a hesitation to openly name racism.

In addition, when P.D. reduces the occurrence of racism in his life from “one or two” to “just one” incident and by the end of the quote, to “no racial experiences... at all,” he attempts to deny knowledge of racism and thus, race. Though P.D. has just alluded to one such incident, he follows a tendency among South Asian immigrants to erase race from their memory and experience. In another example, V.R.B. stated that he had “suffered *very little* discrimination,” before immediately moving on to say that racism had far more to do with one’s outlook than with others’ treatment, that is, our outlook, rather than how others treat us “creates barriers.”⁸⁷ V.R.B. believes that individuals encourage positive or negative treatment through their own presentation of themselves: “If I have openly communicated, I have been received well.”⁸⁸ While he acknowledged that Americans had “built-in opinions,” he preferred not to discuss them. Personally, he continued, he had “not been subject to irrational responses” but then concluded by adding, “*most of the time*, most of the situations.”⁸⁹ Like P.D., V.R.B. also aims to marginalize race from his experience when he prefaces discriminatory treatment with “very little.” Again, like P.D., he likely did not suffer much discrimination; what is compelling, however, is V.R.B.’s refusal to provide any examples—to specifically name

⁸⁷ V.R.B., interview, 24-25.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

racist practices— while simultaneously placing responsibility for discrimination in the hands of the discriminated. His overall discussion of race serves to deflect attention away from racism even though he acknowledges in subtle ways that he has been subject to it.

An examination of the social interactions of South Asian immigrants demonstrates how they were perceived by Americans. You “create friends, circles” and “that is life,” pondered S.K.⁹⁰ Inclusion in some social circles but not others is the result of several factors. Immigrants from India and Pakistan, like many migrants the world over, left their extended families behind, instead forming deep bonds of friendship with the co-ethnics they had often roomed with since their arrival in Houston. Many of these male immigrants did not return home for years, and then only to marry and return quickly to new jobs in the U.S. As large numbers of South Asian women joined new husbands in the U.S., the families and broader Indo-Pak community served as a surrogate extended family with which members spent each weekend. Though eventually some would sponsor their parents to join them, most immigrants have maintained this system of co-ethnic family surrogacy. For example, V.K., U.R., and their husbands still get together at least twice per week and stay in daily contact via telephone.⁹¹ Likewise, with their families, A.H.K. and C.B. got together for dinner almost weekly and regularly took road-trips together during the early 1970s.⁹² In Houston, language boundaries such as Sindhi, Urdu, and Gujarati initially weakened, and were replaced by a broader “South Asian” identity. As each Indian and Pakistani subgroup reached a critical mass by the late 1990s, many

⁹⁰ S.K. and V.K., interview, 5.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² C.B., interview by author, 27 June 2007 (MDA).

South Asians gravitated toward socializing more with their own native language speakers, co-religionists, or national groupings. S.K. explained that this was not due to any dislike for non-Indians; rather, “we are very busy in our own Indian people...we find we don’t need [to mix with others].”⁹³

Most South Asians interacted extensively with other co-ethnics, attending dinners, weddings, and music recitals. Interaction with non-South Asians varied between the virtually nonexistent and occasional but regular dinner out. Others, including A.K. and U.R., met non-Indian friends regularly for dinner or drinks. In general and over time, however, immigrants tended to socialize mostly with other immigrants. Observers may be compelled to ask why South Asians refused to intermingle more closely with non-South Asians. The simple answer is as S.K. stated above: South Asian immigrants found that with the presence of a large enough “community” of Indians and Pakistanis, they did not need to extensively engage socially with ethnic outsiders. But a more complicated answer reveals that the power to socialize with members of the dominant society did not reside only, or even primarily, with the newcomers.

In studies of African American self-segregation, such as *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, scholar Beverly D. Tatum argues that self-segregation for black students results from “the stereotypes, omissions, and distortions that reinforce notions of White superiority [and] are breathed in by Black children as well as White.”⁹⁴ In other words, racialization is a relational process in which, Tatum observes, “our self-perceptions are shaped by the messages that we receive from those

⁹³ S.K. and V.K., interview, 26.

⁹⁴ Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, 55.

around us.”⁹⁵ We assign meaning and significance to categories such as race according to the importance society places on them. Individuals “learn” race, that is, become racialized, by the constant feed of direct and subtle responses others offer through the course of any day. In experience after experience, individuals become acutely aware of which categories are most significant and which meanings are assigned to them. For example, many young Latinos, after countless “well-intentioned” comments from strangers about how well they speak English, come to understand that even after four generations of ancestors living in the U.S., their skin color signifies foreigner to other Americans. Similarly, when a white American exclaims that a baby’s hair is “just the most beautiful! It’s white blond!” anyone who is privy to that conversation learns that lightness is valued among whites.⁹⁶ Likewise, when older Pakistani women comment on how pretty a new bride is because “she’s fair-skinned,” young Pakistanis realize the significance of skin tone to South Asian conceptions of beauty.

The degree to which immigrants of color have socialized with other groups of people depends, in large part, on how much other groups desire socialization with *them*, as evidenced by Tatum’s obvious but overlooked complementary question to her book title: why are all the white kids sitting together?⁹⁷ Indian immigrant S.K. stated, matter-of-factly, “We are foreigners and look to Texans like outsiders.”⁹⁸ He recalled that in the mid-1970s when he first moved to his Spring Branch apartment complex, white

⁹⁵ Ibid., 53-4.

⁹⁶ See also, Richard Dyer, *White* (1997), for how, using special lighting techniques, “lightness” of skin and hair is emphasized and exaggerated in western film imagery. I recently overheard the comment on “white-blond hair.”

⁹⁷ Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, 52.

⁹⁸ S.K. and V.K., interview.

neighbors “used to see you [and] they would make their hands held,” meaning that they refrained from shaking hands with him. To S.K., this action indicated that white Americans were not interested in relationship building.⁹⁹ In 1974 P.M. moved into the campus dormitory at the University of Houston as a graduate student in engineering. Haltingly, he recalled:

It was just... I really don't know but I mean, there were some international students that would go and venture into fraternities and things like that but not much. Graduate students of course, in a given department, they... they were very free, freely interacting, exchanging thoughts and ideas and other things but not so... I was... for a year I was in the Quadrangle in the University of Houston. *And even when I'd go out and sit for lunch or dinner or something like that most of the kids would not... were not very talkative to us so we would sit and... it just so happened* that international students would sit in the same table and talk with each other but the other kids would not join them.¹⁰⁰

At least a few interviewees sensed that white Americans were reluctant to socialize with them whether in the 1970s or more recently. Their interactions were and, in many cases, still are limited to basic greetings and occasional front yard conversations.¹⁰¹ M.A.S.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰⁰ P.M., interview.

¹⁰¹ S.K. and V.K., interview, 25.

explained that in the mid-1960s when and his family first moved to Houston from Pakistan,

the Americans normally did not want to be friends with you. Just like our neighbors. Even now, we only see them outside. You know, [it's] "Hello, Muhammad. How are you? Everything is looking good." Blah, blah. Then, they go inside. You invite them. Chances are, they won't show up... It is very difficult. Even the neighbors here . . . you wave and that is it. The only people that interact are mostly at work. And some of them, they do become your friends.¹⁰²

Racism was expressed in a variety of ways, not all of which are traceable or obvious. Rather, those who have been the recipients of subtle racism (which is not necessarily aggressive nor violent) know it, recognize it as subtle, and see it as sometimes open to interpretation. Still, as anthropologist Philomena Essed insists, those who have experienced racism recognize its subtleties to an extent that others cannot, and so have a clear sense when such discrimination occurs.¹⁰³

Several male immigrants reported that, as a result of their foreign background or race, they have experienced a glass ceiling at work, saying that "as a foreigner you have to work twice as hard as the other person to achieve what you did."¹⁰⁴ None of the interviewees filed official complaints in their companies, explaining that it was "very

¹⁰² M.A.S., interview, 13-14.

¹⁰³ Philomena Essed, *Everyday Racism* (Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 1990), 34-5.

¹⁰⁴ S.M., interview, 47.

difficult to prove discrimination. I mean... no one tells you to your face 'you're not doing this' [or] 'you're not getting that' [or] 'you don't belong to the right country club and play golf with the right people.' They don't tell you all that stuff. But you know, I'm intelligent enough to know.”¹⁰⁵ Working for twenty-three years in a prominent oil company, S.M. estimated that there were “four or five of us Indians who I think should have been at much higher levels than we were. But none of us had gotten to that.”¹⁰⁶ Reflecting more on this phenomenon, S.M. commented that because the oil industry in Houston through the 1990s was “very much a white man's club,” women did not achieve high posts in the company, either.¹⁰⁷ Sociologist Pawan Dhingra cites studies indicating that because Asian immigrants are read as “accommodating” and as possessing weak communication skills, they “can receive some promotions but rarely enter upper management.”¹⁰⁸

Affirming his experience of a glass ceiling, Z.A., an engineer, explained that in the beginning, Houston's engineering firms were unaccustomed to “outsiders.” He continued,

if there was a job, they will probably give you a job but a promotion, it was very [unlikely] . . . they will like you as a worker, but not to go up. Now, it is a little bit of . . . I mean, they are getting used to that now. These [South Asian] guys can

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 48. Despite this particular immigrant's (very high) position in the oil company he worked for, he claimed to have received far fewer perks than did another white somewhat similarly ranked employee.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 48-9.

¹⁰⁸ Pawan Dhingra, *Managing Multicultural Lives: Asian American Professionals and the Challenge of Multiple Identities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 136.

go up but I don't know if it is one hundred percent or not. It is much easier now because I think the barrier has been broken by us...At least if you are qualified, getting a job is not a problem. The only thing is...you will feel more resistance, subtle resistance.¹⁰⁹

Regarding his experiences in Houston's large engineering firms, Z.A. suggests that the resistance to Asians rising in the ranks has been "subtle." He continues, "They won't say anything. It is an educated place. They talk very nicely." In general, South Asian immigrants make a clear association between a perceived open racism by the working class but a coded, more discreet racism by professionals.

In 1967 S.K., an architect by training, emigrated from Bombay to Toronto, Canada. His wife and two young children joined him soon after. He quickly found his migration there to be "a complete waste of time" and that "British Canada was not...very fair for foreigners, especially Indians." He "had to just keep changing jobs to get a living." After struggling with some difficulty for six or seven months, S.K. and his family moved to New York where he quickly found a secure and promising job at Bechtel Corporation.¹¹⁰ He found professional New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s to be welcoming and accepting of foreigners. He noted that after leaving New York for Houston, Louisville, Kentucky, and San Francisco during the mid- to the late 1970s, he experienced a similarly positive reception in the latter two cities, though not in

¹⁰⁹ Z.A., interview by author, 21 January 2007 (MDA), 16.

¹¹⁰ S.K. and V.K., interview, 2.

Houston.¹¹¹ Rather, as noted above, while living in Spring Branch in 1976, he found unfriendly neighbors, so that he and his wife “never used to mix with these people.”¹¹² When asked if he thought other groups in America were discriminated against, S.K. speculated that “yeah, maybe most—all. All. [This] means that those who were not Houston-Texans, they treat us the same,” with the same “roughness.”¹¹³

S.K. came to Houston in 1976 after living for nearly a decade in New York City. He felt an immediate difference in regional and state culture, and although Houston was already a large city by 1976, he observed a provincial, “southern” outlook that allowed little room for “outsiders.”¹¹⁴ He moved away for four years and upon returning in 1980, noticed a remarkable change. The “whole picture was changed” in that short window of time.¹¹⁵ He reasoned that in the late 1970s, several major, national oil companies relocated their headquarters to Houston and, due to their profit-making incentives and hiring of Indian employees, the professional workplace became more accommodating to foreigners. That was when “things changed professionally” and companies “learned the lesson that this [i.e. prejudice] is not the way to live.”¹¹⁶ By 1980, according to S.K., Bechtel had hired more Indian employees at all levels including management and transferred Indian employees, such as his own manager in New York, Mahinder

¹¹¹ Ibid., 5-8.

¹¹² Ibid., 25.

¹¹³ Ibid., 41.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Kalsenia, to their Houston location.¹¹⁷ “Smart” Texans quickly adjusted to the new business climate while “discriminating and trouble-making” Texans, he concluded, must have found other, less progressive workplaces.¹¹⁸ His found that the work environment at his own place of employment, Bechtel, had undergone “a noticeable change.”¹¹⁹ While this perception may not have represented wide-ranging workplace changes, workplace hostility had noticeably decreased for S.K.

Like S.K., others also defined and understood racial discrimination in Houston relative to other places they had lived. A.K. moved from Chennai, India, to London in 1968. Remaining in London until 1970, he faced “a huge discrimination problem.”¹²⁰ Unhappy with, among other things, housing discrimination and general hostility, he decided that he “didn't feel comfortable, didn't want to be there” anymore.¹²¹ He explained that “you walk in the snow at night from the tube station to your apartment or something, these guys, youngsters would throw stones or snowballs at you. It was very humiliating.”¹²² Anil found the residents of the city of Houston, by comparison, especially warm and welcoming. After applying for an American visa sponsored by a

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹²⁰ A.K., interview by author, 2 August 2007 (MDA), 2.

¹²¹ A.K., interview, 4, 2. Regarding housing, A.K. said, “the accommodation was pathetic. Discrimination, again. Basically, whoever you would call, wherever you would call, you wouldn't get accommodation unless you were back with the Asian group,” p. 4.

¹²² Ibid., 24.

friend in Oklahoma, he quickly found a job with the Houston branch of a British company, Burroughs, and moved to Houston in the early 1970s.¹²³

However, A.K. noted that outside of the city, “in certain places” including “Huntsville, Conroe, Beaumont, Baytown—that area,” he had experienced discrimination first-hand.¹²⁴ In these outlying areas, restaurant employees “wouldn’t serve you. The minute you walked in, the looks were different and the way they took the order. They were just waiting for you to get out.”¹²⁵ He explained that “outside Houston, there was a problem.”¹²⁶ The positive interactions he experienced within the city of Houston coupled with the infrequency of his visits to these smaller Texas towns mitigated the overall effects of discrimination he experienced in his early years as an immigrant. A.K. describes his reception in the city as “wonderful” and “very friendly.”¹²⁷

Other South Asians, too, perceived large cities as more accepting of minorities than small towns. V.A.K. explained that “in a place like Houston, also the bigger cities, there is no such problem. But I would still think that...if you go to a smaller place, a much smaller place, you might face some of that. Not that I personally have, but I’m just guessing.”¹²⁸ Similarly, Houston— as a southern place somewhat removed from the Deep South—seems to escape the stigma of racial discrimination attached to the South. As one of the largest metropolitan areas in the South, as a majority-minority city, and as a city of

¹²³ A.K., interview.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 8-9.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹²⁸ V.A.K., interview, 24.

immigrants, Houston appears to South Asian immigrants as an oasis in the midst of southern parochialism and its resulting discrimination. P.D. suggested that in “the Deep South—we[‘re] talk[ing] about Alabama and places like that—I’m sure there is discrimination. I have never lived there outside of Houston so I cannot say from personal experience. But I believe that there is more discrimination there then it is in the bigger towns.” When asked why this might be the case, P.D. replied,

I feel that it’s because the other parts of the country have more of an influx of foreigners. They are more used to seeing Indians or African or Europeans moving into the Northeast corridor. And in California they are used to seeing the Oriental race coming in. So they are more used to foreigners. They are more tolerant of other races because [in] over one hundred years you get conditioned. In the Deep South there has been less of an influx of foreigners because there are not that many jobs also. That’s what I would guess.¹²⁹

South Asians believed that residents of large, diverse urban areas offered them acceptance in a way that more homogenous towns and cities could not. While residents of small towns have historically differed along many axes, whether religious denomination or interests, for example, these differences are not embodied and therefore, not always public. Conversely, ethnic and racial differences are marked on the body for many Asians and are thus, inescapable. In a highly racialized society, one of the most salient differences for immigrants of color is race, and the assertion that, essentially, Asians

¹²⁹ P.D., interview, 23-4.

“blend in” in large heterogonous American cities demonstrates immigrants’ own recognition of race as a lived experience.

Other immigrants contend that they have not experienced any racial discrimination. G.B., a Pakistani entrepreneur, maintains that “Houston has been really good to me” and that over the course of his thirty-four years in the city, white Americans have consistently treated him well.¹³⁰ Likewise, Pakistani immigrant C.B. attended English language classes at Methodist Church in the Texas Medical Center under the advice and support of her white American neighbor, Wilma Curry. C.B. emphasized that “at that time there were not so many foreigners. So they [at the Methodist Church] were fascinated by a young girl coming to this country. And they helped me with everything. I cannot thank them enough. I mean really, they helped me.”¹³¹ When asked whether being an immigrant had affected her opportunities or limited her in any way, C.B. replied, “No, not at all.”¹³² P.D., who moved to Houston in 1974 from Bombay, observed that, regarding racial discrimination, “I personally have not seen it, no... I don’t even remember any incident where I was an observer, let alone being a participant.”¹³³ Moving from Karachi, Pakistan, to Houston in 1975, N.F. thought Houstonians “accepted me very well” and recalled, “they were really nice people and they tried to help me with where the grocery stores were, what you need to buy, and how you do things, so they taught me quite a bit.”¹³⁴ A.K. moved from Bombay via London to Houston, and he “was just

¹³⁰ G.B., interview by author, 19 July 2007 (MDA).

¹³¹ C.B., interview by author, 27 June 2007 (MDA), 6.

¹³² Ibid., 15.

¹³³ P.D., interview, 24.

¹³⁴ N.F., interview by author, 22 January 2007 (MDA), 3-4.

amazed at the reception” in Houston. His sense was that Houstonians were “very friendly, very happy,” and that he had “found the right place to start a career.”¹³⁵

Despite prior familiarity with the discriminatory treatment of African Americans, after migration, Indian and Pakistani immigrants did not expect white Americans to mistreat them, and for the most part, their expectations were borne out. Future South Asian emigrants came to the U.S. with pre-formed racial ideas that underwent change after intersecting with the American racial landscape. Though the earliest histories of South Asians in the U.S. reveal openly hostile and violent responses to the “Hindoo Invasion,” Americans took little notice of the post-1965 migration wave from the Indian Subcontinent. In place of a strong nativist outcry and calls for exclusionary legislation as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, South Asian immigrants report a generally open, if limited, welcome. Scholars have pointed to the long history of connections between the U.S. and the Indian Subcontinent. The settling of mostly Bengali seamen of the British navy in black Harlem during the late nineteenth century, the successful missionary activities of the Ahmadiyya movement among African Americans in the early twentieth century, correspondence between black and Indian activists such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Lala Lajpat Rai, all exemplify the sorts of relationships forged between African Americans in the U.S. and South Asians.¹³⁶ In addition, activists including African American Benjamin Mays and Indian Taraknath

¹³⁵ A.K., interview, 9.

¹³⁶ See Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Sylvia Chan-Malik, “A Part of Islam”: Race and the Making of Muslim America, 1958-2008,” (manuscript in progress); and Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle For Freedom In The United States And India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Das, traveled between the U.S. and British India, recounting their experiences to interested publics.¹³⁷

In the mid-1960s, however, these associations seem not to have had wide circulation among residents of South Asia. Indeed, interviewees had no knowledge of African American civil rights activists' visits to India, the presence of entire communities of African-origin former slaves (*Siddis*) in western India, or the landmark race case, *US v Bhagat Singh Thind*.¹³⁸ Whether due to the intellectual nature of previous correspondence (e.g. Du Bois and Rai), the relatively small population size of immigrant groups (e.g. Bengali Harlemites and *Siddis*), or the simple fact that more Indians had traveled to the U.S. than African Americans to India, average Indians and Pakistanis after 1965 had very limited knowledge of this long and varied cross-cultural exchange of people and ideas. As they prepared for their journeys to the U.S., many South Asians understood, at least at a basic level, the historical oppression of African Americans, though in light of the King and Kennedy assassinations rather than any Du Bois-Rai connections or the like. For this soon-to-be minority group—this group of middle-class, educationally empowered South Asians—solidarity with African Americans, no matter what the historical precedent, ultimately proved improbable. Their attitudes toward racialized groups in the U.S. were

¹³⁷ See Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans And India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008); and Joan Jensen, *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

¹³⁸ In the *Thind* case of 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Asian Indians could be denied naturalized citizenship because they were not white according to popular and scientific notions of race. Bhagat Thind had argued that he was "Aryan"—a pure white—since Aryans originated in India. The Court, noting the "assimilability" of Europeans and the clear "unassimilability" of Asian Indians, disagreed.

On *Siddis*, see Pashington Obeng, *Shaping Membership, Defining Nation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); and, Ababu Minda, "An African Indian Community in Hyderabad: Siddi Identity, Its Maintenance and Change," (Dissertation, Gottingen: University of Gottingen, 2004). On race cases, see Ian Haney-Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

contingent upon contemporary social and economic events, rather than long-term historical memory. From the bottom-up, the mass of South Asian immigrants after the 1960s were neither intellectuals nor activists. After settling in the U.S., their aims were tied in complex ways to their status as Asians and as immigrants; uniting with racially oppressed peoples in recognition of historical and ongoing inequality did not correspond with those aims.

The earlier migration of Punjabi agricultural and lumber workers and Bengali seamen faced a level of discrimination largely unknown to post-1960 student-immigrants in the U.S. On American college campuses such as the University of Houston in the 1960s and 1970s, international students interacted almost entirely with departmental colleagues and South Asian co-ethnics with whom they established meaningful relationships. On and around campus, in their shared apartments, through news and entertainment media, and later in workplaces and neighborhoods throughout the city, these newcomers learned the language of race. They understood that as immigrants, as “forever foreigners,” they must constantly reaffirm their allegiance to the United States because their authenticity as Americans was never secure.¹³⁹ Employing the language and ideologies of race and implicating oneself in racial hierarchies buttresses South Asian immigrant claims to “Americanness.” Though they recognized at least some of the injustices imposed on other people of color and sometimes were themselves targeted in similar ways, they nevertheless refrain from open criticism lest they compromise their tenuous social, economic, and increasingly, political advantages.

¹³⁹ Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

Conclusion

South Asians carried with them the legacies of a colonial past—that is, implication into capitalist economies supported by middle-class value systems—that facilitated their rise to success in the United States. Whether in regards to college admissions in South Asia or the U.S., individual ability alone did not enable access or facilitate social mobility. If the possession of economic, cultural, and social capital were integral to educational attainment in India and Pakistan, they were likewise a boon in entering highly skilled immigration streams, and in aiding success in host countries. Since arriving in Houston in the mid-1960s and 1970s, Indian and Pakistani immigrants have fairly consistently opted to live in the suburbs. They have done so out of stated concerns for safety, educational quality, long-term house values, square footage, and environmental aesthetics such as cleanliness and abundance of green space. They especially factor in the “type” of neighbor they will have and the “types” of class mates with whom their children will attend school.

Their moving to the suburbs, alongside white professionals, was not driven by an explicit or implicit desire to self-segregate. Nevertheless, many of the reasons cited for

moving to the suburbs were directly informed by racial constructions. “Safety” masked the fear of crime which they conceptually linked to African Americans. “Educational quality” incorporated lack of academic competition from and fears of “cultural pollution” by students of color. In immigrants’ and other Americans’ eyes, subjective “long-term house values” were directly related to the percentage of African American and Latino residents in a neighborhood. One could ostensibly argue that the aesthetics of much of suburbia are shaped as much by the presence of green space and openness as by the relative dearth of lower-income racial and ethnic minorities. In addition to this “environmental aesthetic,” the particular aesthetic of modern, American, *urban* space in the late twentieth century is marked by higher population density and the visual presence of pedestrians who are largely racial and ethnic minorities.

In the face of national economic recession cycles, Houston’s economy has historically tended to emerge as relatively sound. As a result, the city and its surrounding area continue to draw large numbers of immigrants. The city’s boosters pride themselves on the high levels of diversity in the city and the high growth rate. Simultaneously, however, city residents suffer from among the lowest rates of health coverage in the nation.¹ Houston is also regarded as highly segregated city with the rate of integrated neighborhoods remaining fixed for the past two decades.² The public school district (HISD) has long struggled to raise low test scores, attendance levels, graduation rates,

¹*Window on State Government: Fiscal Notes*, Susan Combs, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (May 2007), <http://www.window.state.tx.us/comptrol/fnotes/fn0705/price.html>. Accessed 3/10/13; *The Uninsured in Texas*, Texas Medical Association, http://www.texmed.org/Uninsured_in_Texas/. Accessed 3/10/13; *Working Together For a Healthy Texas*, Texas Department of Insurance State Planning Grant Project (September 2005), <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/reports/life/documents/spgint05.pdf>. Accessed 3/10/13.

² “Minority Suburbanization, Stable Integration, and Economic Opportunity in Fifteen Metropolitan Regions,” Institute on Race and Poverty (February: 2006), 10.

and overall performance. Over 80 percent of students in this mostly Latino and African American district are economically disadvantaged.³ While Houstonians have much to be proud of, inequalities in wealth distribution continue to increase, perpetuating inequalities in tax-based school funding. Reports on the positive health of the region often incorporate precisely that—the region. When that focus is narrowed to the city level, analyzing areas by median income, one can then discern opposing patterns of development. Though the dichotomy between city and suburb is not so clean, certainly, historically black and brown (Latino) areas in the city continue to exhibit the weakest growth income levels. Thus, the concentration of poverty exacerbates that poverty over time while it also exacerbates the segregation of area, which in turns feeds the cycle of poverty. Map series 5 shows that the lightest shaded areas corresponding to the lowest income levels have remained so over the course of forty years.⁴

As immigration from the Indian Subcontinent has shifted from being occupation-based to being 85-percent based on family reunification by the mid-1980s, patterns have already been altered. Many newer immigrants lacked the professional qualifications of their Asian American relatives. Earlier immigrants who entered the U.S. under the occupational and investor categories were, by definition, more educationally qualified while later immigrants entering under the family reunification category exhibit a wider range of educational qualifications, and include fewer college graduates. As the Indian and Pakistani communities have diversified, poverty rates for these groups have continued to climb, foretelling a dramatically altered demographic for the future

³ *HISD 2011-2012 Facts and Figures*, Houston Independent School District, HISDFactsFigures2012Final.pdf. Accessed 3/10/13.

⁴ See Appendix.

population. Nationally, 9.8 and 16.5 percent of the total Indian and Pakistani populations lived in poverty in 1999.⁵ Roughly 90 percent of these immigrants entering the U.S. after 1985 were admitted under the family reunification category, as opposed to only 25 or 30 percent in 1969.⁶ As the structure of immigration from South Asia expands to include more extended family members, refugees (from Burma), and immigrants from other sending regions (especially Bangladesh and Nepal), it is inevitable that the concerns, struggles, and narratives will also change.

An instructive corollary can be found in the example of South Asian immigrants in the United Kingdom. There, second- and third-generation South Asians have contended with socio-economic disadvantages which, in turn, affect their occupational choice. The children of unskilled or low-skilled South Asian industrial laborers in the UK continue to face high rates of unemployment and poverty, in some cases much higher than the native English or Scottish populations.⁷ Mired in poverty and living in cramped housing conditions, many second-generation Asian Britons have not overwhelmingly chosen to pursue higher education. Historian Ron Ramdin in *Reimagining Britain* recognizes a shared history between “coloured” peoples of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Middle East.⁸ Wanting to form a unified front against white racism toward immigrants and their descendants in Britain, Ramdin and others recognize

⁵ *We the People: Asians in the United States* (Census 2000 Special Reports), U.S. Census Bureau (December 2004), 17. The national rate of poverty in 1999 was 12.4 %.

⁶ Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy 1850-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 82.

⁷ Ceri Peach, “South Asian migration and settlement in Great Britain, 1951-2001,” *Contemporary South Asia* 15, 2 (June, 2006).

⁸ Ron Ramdin, *Reimagining Britain: 500 Years of Black and Asian History* (London, Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 1999).

solidarity in the colonial experiences between all non-whites in Britain. Ramdin “reconstructs” British history over the last 500 years by contextually juxtaposing the histories of native whites with Asians and blacks as interdependent, rather than as separate stories. British identity has been multicultural for decades, according to Ramdin, and this should be incorporated into the historian’s view. He focuses on Asians and blacks because they are the largest ethnic minorities in Britain, and collectively labels them “black,” a “political colour.”⁹ Though some have preferred to recognize the distinct histories and identities of their specific communities, many “coloured” youth have embraced black solidarity as an ideological coalition for resistance in an impoverished underclass.

The second and third generations of South Asian American youth present a fracturing of older patterns. They practice higher rates of exogamy than did their parents and grandparents. Others feel a generational connection to a broad “Asian American” identity in ways that their parents never felt for other Asian immigrants—a classic case of how the creation of a label informs the formation of identity. Furthermore, as the children of recent Indian and Pakistani immigrants come from a different class background than the post-1960s generation, they may choose to align themselves with similar class members. Like Asian Britons, they may opt for a collective class-based identity. In north Houston I have observed the children of working-class South Asian immigrants adopt the dress, mannerisms, and lexicon of Latino and African American working-class youth.¹⁰ Identity formation among South Asian youth can especially enhance the understanding of

⁹ *Ibid.*, x.

¹⁰ For more information, see Alejandro Portes’s theory of segmented assimilation.

“nation” and “American” as Asian Indian, Pakistani American, Bangladeshi American, and Burmese Americans negotiate these ethnic identities, layering them in innovative ways. The Houston Metropolitan area provides rich examples and experiences from which to construct past and present narratives.

Still, Houston remains an understudied but rich source of knowledge. Though there exists a handful of dissertations and theses on Indians and Pakistanis in Houston, I know of no full-length monographs.¹¹ Future scholarship on Asian Americans would profit from comparative work between Houston and other “Sunbelt” cities such as Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham, and Phoenix as well as places with high south Asian populations such as Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Furthermore, where I have focused on race for early, post-1960 immigrants, a continuation of such trends among subsequent generations is also essential.

Whereas I found the correlation between race and religion to be minimal for South Asian immigrants, with the rise of the ultra-nationalistic *Hindutva* movement—heavily funded by wealthy Indian Hindus in the U.S. and the rediscovery of religion among Muslim South Asians in the diaspora—religion may well emerge as one of the most fruitful lines of analysis. A path of inquiry that has drawn scholarly interest is the current racialization of Muslim immigrants and their descendents.¹² Religion (Islam) and

¹¹ See Bela Thacker, “Homeward Bound: Asian-Indian Women Putting Down Roots in Houston, TX,” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2004); and Ahmed Afzal, “Transnational Religious and Citizenship Practices and the Pakistani Immigrant Experience in Houston, Texas” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2005).

¹² See Evelyn Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation After 9/11* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Junaid Akram Rana, *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Nicolette Karam, *The 9/11 Backlash: a Decade of U.S. Hate Crimes Targeting the Innocent*, 1st ed (Berkeley, Calif.: Beatitude Press, 2012); Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

race (recognized as “apparently” South Asian or Arab) are being inscribed as inherently embodied. Religious markers such as head coverings, beards, and non-Western garb have coalesced with phenotypical signifiers including dark skin and dark hair to create a new racial category of “visibly Muslim.” Like previously racialized groups, moral tendencies are inscribed on the body of a religious and racial Other. Also, like African Americans in the Jim Crow South or Japanese during World War II, civil liberties of “visible Muslims” are officially subject to question and suspension by all levels of government authority. Since before 9/11 but increasingly after, individuals coded as “Muslim” (whether they are in fact Muslim is irrelevant since Sikhs have also been targeted for searches at airports and as victims of hate crimes intended for Muslims) are assumed to be threats requiring surveillance and control. Like “Negroes” throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, visible Muslims in the twentieth century are regarded by some as perpetually “unassimilable.” Because race is an embodied category scripted with visible markers of difference—that is, it is located *on* the body (and even *in* the body, according to adherents of race ideology)—a racialized body cannot fully escape its scripting.

Immigrants from South Asia broadly, calculated the benefits of whiteness. Though many Indian and Pakistani immigrants found themselves visibly marked as foreign in the United States—specifically, as nonwhite—they, nonetheless, positioned themselves strategically to gain the maximum privileges associated with whiteness, all without coveting a white identity. The very fact of their ability to openly choose residence and schooling was dependent upon their entry into a post-Civil Rights Act, post-*de jure* segregated South. They carried neither the baggage of enslavement nor legalized racial discrimination. They stepped onto the field of battle—a long battle fought

by African American activists since the Civil War—after the war for rights had waned. They did not realize that they stood upon a battlefield. They simply marched on upon invisible shoulders. Unhindered by Jim Crow, Indian and Pakistani immigrants in the New South secured advanced degrees in institutes of higher learning only recently opened to African Americans. They moved into suburban neighborhoods with higher house values and higher-tax funded schools, thereby securing for their children as well the material benefits of whiteness. Arrival in the middle class was marked by, among other things, suburbanization. Like other middle-class Americans—white, black, and Latino—who settled in the suburbs after the Second World War, South Asian immigrants performed their class prerogative by their neighborhood choice.

The United States after the civil rights movement has often been called “post-racial.”¹³ Racial ideologies, however, are more than just ideas; they are also the actions derived from those ideas and the policies that maintain them. Tracing collective action over time in combination with the meanings ascribed to those actions, reveals patterns present in southern and American society—it refutes the notion of a post-racial America.

¹³ See William J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Dinesh D’Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society* (New York: Free Press, 1995); and Orlando Patterson, *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America’s “Racial” Crisis* (Washington, DC: Civitas/Conterpoint, 1997). See also, work by Glenn Firebaugh, Kenneth Davis, and Seymour Lipset.

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Appendix A: Oral History Interviews

Table 1 Oral History Interviewees (sorted by first initial)

Initials	Gender	Birthplace	Nationality Before U.S.	Religious Affiliation	Arrival in US	Interview Date	Profession/ Education	Migration Status
A.H.K.	female	India	Pakistani	Muslim	1970	7/17/07	Med. Technologist (MS)	Wife
A.K.	male	Chennai	Indian	Hindu	1970	8/2/07	Engineer/Small business	Engineer (BS)
A.S.A.	male	Bombay	Indian	Hindu	1964	9/5/11	Chem. Engineer	Student (BS)
C.B.	female	Shikarpur, Sin.	Pakistani	Hindu	1970	6/26/07	Small business-owner	Wife
G.B.	male	Karachi	Pakistani	Muslim	1973	7/19/07	Entrepreneur	Student (BA)
I.S.	female	Nowgong	Pakistani	Muslim	1964	8/2/07	Homemaker/Secretary	Wife
J.K.	male	Baroda	Indian	Hindu	1970	7/11/07	Engineer	Student (MBA)
K.S.	female	Gabat, Gujar.	Indian	Hindu	1972	12/21/11	Homemaker	Wife
K.V.	male	Rajamundhry	Indian	Hindu	1974	6/7/07	Engineer	Engineer
M.A.S.	male	India	Pakistani	Muslim	1964	6/17/07	Engineer/Small-business	Student (BS)
M.J.K.	male	Karachi	Pakistani	Muslim	1975	1/25/07	Civil Engineer	Student (MS)
M.K.	male	Rampur, Ind.	Pakistani	Muslim	1966	9/5/11	Geophysicist	Student (PhD)
M.U.K.	male	Jabalpur, Ind.	Pakistani	Muslim	1963	1/21/07	Professor	Student (MS)
N.F.	female	Karachi	Pakistani	Muslim	1975	1/22/07	Homemaker	Wife
N.M.	female	Dohhud, Sau.	Indian	Hindu	1969	12/22/11	Physician/Respiratory Therapist	Wife
P.A.	male	Bombay	Indian	PA	1978	6/20/11	Consultant	Student (MBA)
P.B.	female	Simla	Indian	Hindu	1971	7/11/07	Homemaker (MBA)	Wife
P.D.	male	Bombay	Indian	Jain	1974	8/26/11	Chemical Engineer	Student (PhD)
P.M.	male	Bombay	Indian	NA	1974	10/8/11	Chemical Engineer	Student (PhD)
R.B.	male	Gujarat	Indian	Hindu	1964	6/14/07	Post-Doc/Researcher	Researcher
R.K.	female	Chennai	Indian	Hindu	1975	8/2/07	Small-business owner	Wife
R.P.	female	Bheta, Bihar	Indian	Hindu	1970	11/15/11	Homemaker (BA)	Wife
S.A.K.	female	Baroda	Indian	Muslim	1972	7/31/07	Professor	Wife
S.B.	male	Rohri, Sindh	Pakistani	Hindu	1968	7/25/12	Engineer/Realtor	Student (BS)
S.J.B.	female	Gujurat	Indian	Hindu	1964	6/14/07	Homemaker	Wife
S.K.	male	Baroda	Indian	Hindu	1968	8/16/11	Architect	Architect (BA)
S.M.	male	Faizabad.UP	Indian	Parsi	1968	9/21/11	Chemical Engineer	Student (MS)
S.P.	male	Chennai	Indian	Hindu	1970	3/2/08	Engineer	NA
U.M.	male	Kanpur	Indian	Hindu	1970	10/5/11	Chemical Engineer	Student (MS,PhD)
U.R.	female	Poona	Indian	Hindu	1965	6/8/11	Medical Technologist	Student (MS)
V.A.	female	Bombay	Indian	Hindu	1964	9/5/11	Homemaker	Wife
V.A.K.	male	Bombay	Indian	Sai Baba	1979	8/17/11	Electrical Engin./Busin. owner	Student (MS)
V.B.	female	New Delhi	Indian	NA	1972	9/21/11	Office Work (MA, MBA)	Wife

V.K.	female	Bombay	Indian	Hindu	1968	8/16/11	Homemaker (BA)	Wife
V.R.B.	male	Ludhiana	Indian	Hindu	1970	9/21/11	Construction Engineer	Engineer
Z.A.	male	Bihar	Indian	Muslim	1970	1/21/07	Mech. Engineer	Engineer

Appendix B: Maps and Figures



Map 1: Asia

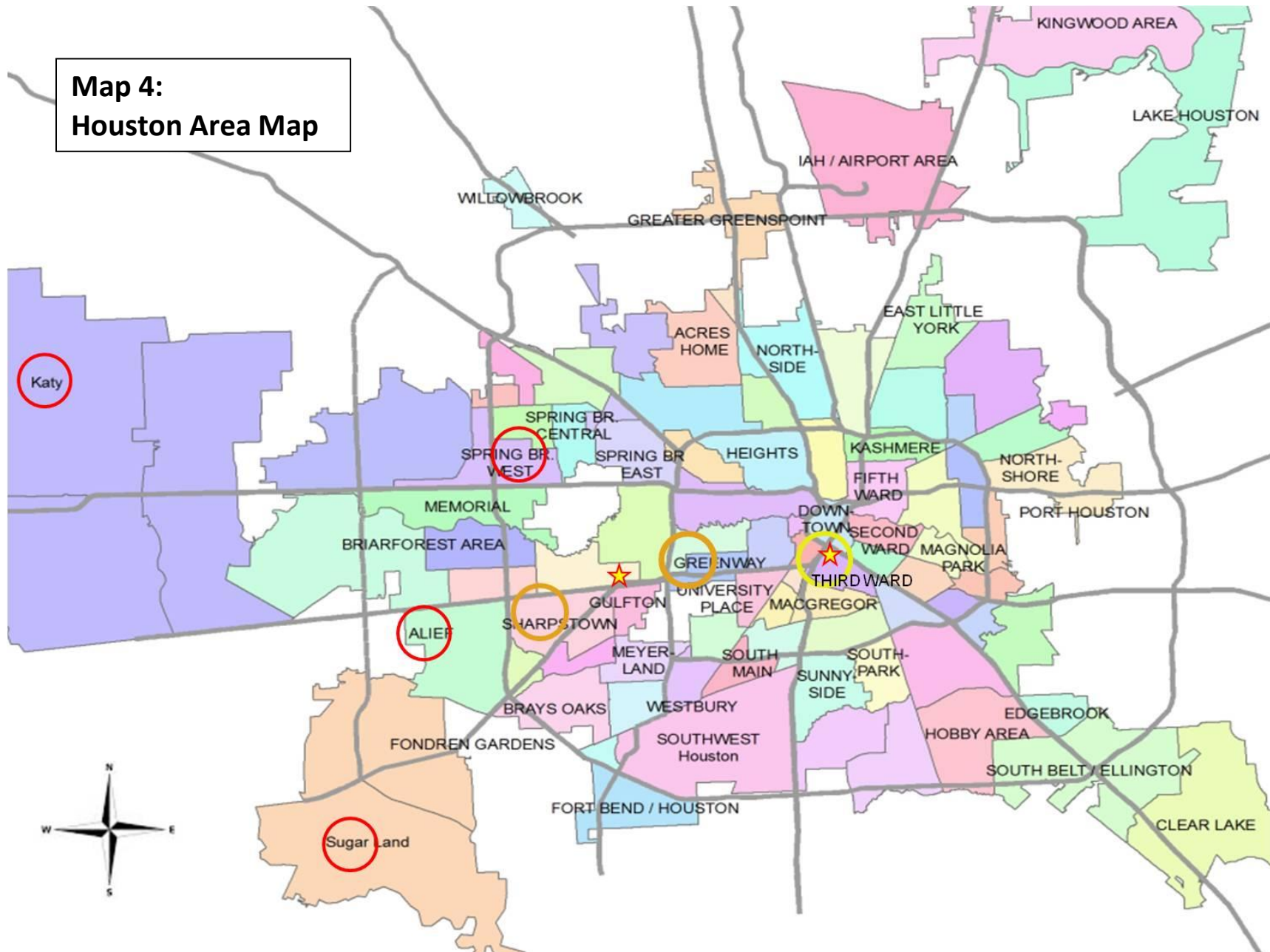


Map 2: India: States and Major Cities

Map 3: Pakistan: States and Major Cities



Map 4:
Houston Area Map
















Map Series 5: Houston Metropolitan Area-Income Levels (1970-2010)


















Map 5A 1970

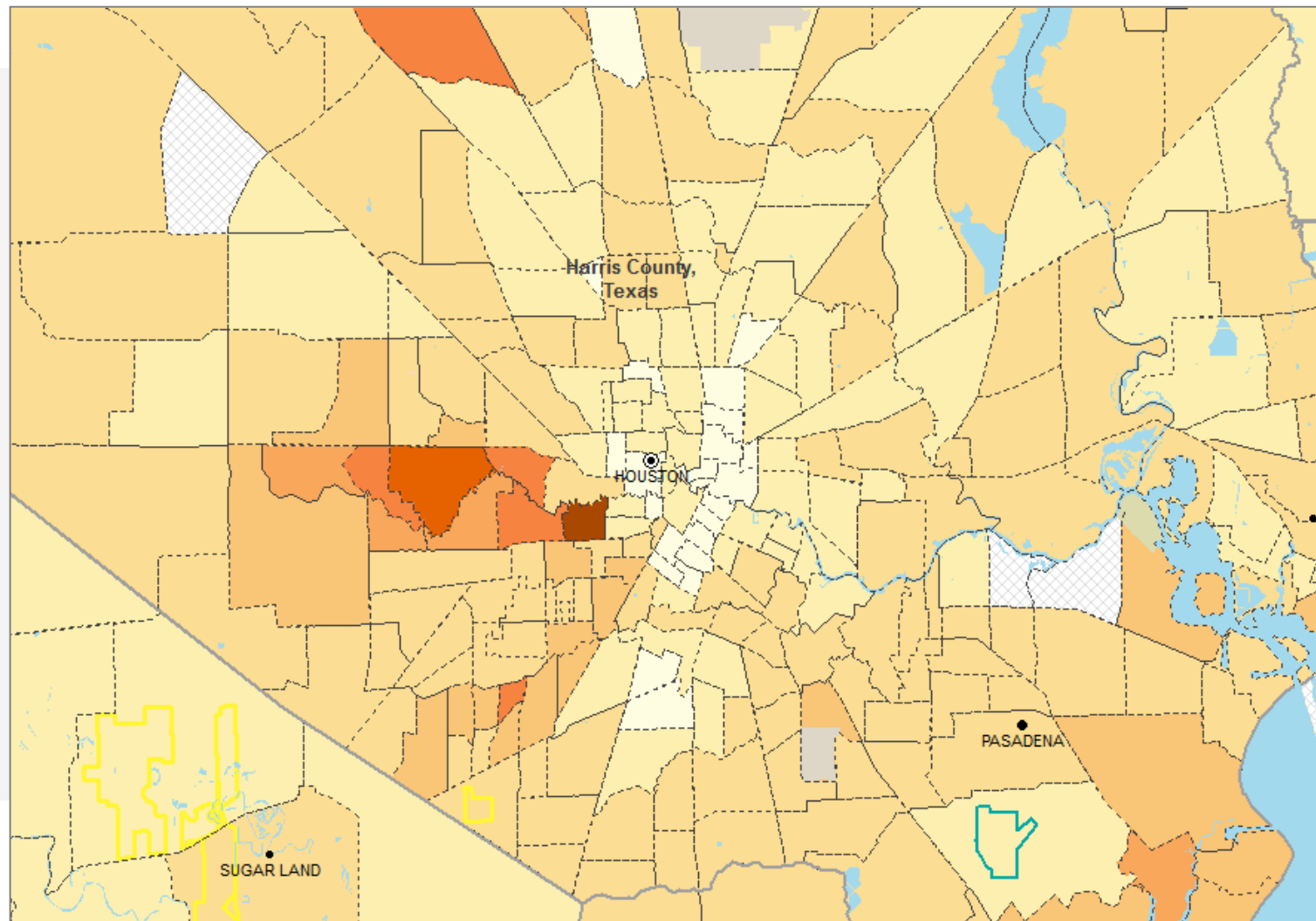
Income

1970 Census Tract

Average Family Income

-  Suppressed by Census
-  n/a (<100 base cases)
-  < \$7,000
-  \$7,000 to \$10,000
-  \$10,000 to \$15,000
-  \$15,000 to \$20,000
-  \$20,000 to \$25,000
-  \$25,000 to \$30,000
-  \$30,000 to \$35,000
-  \$35,000 to \$40,000
-  \$40,000 to \$50,000
-  \$50,000 to \$75,000
-  \$75,000 to \$194,475

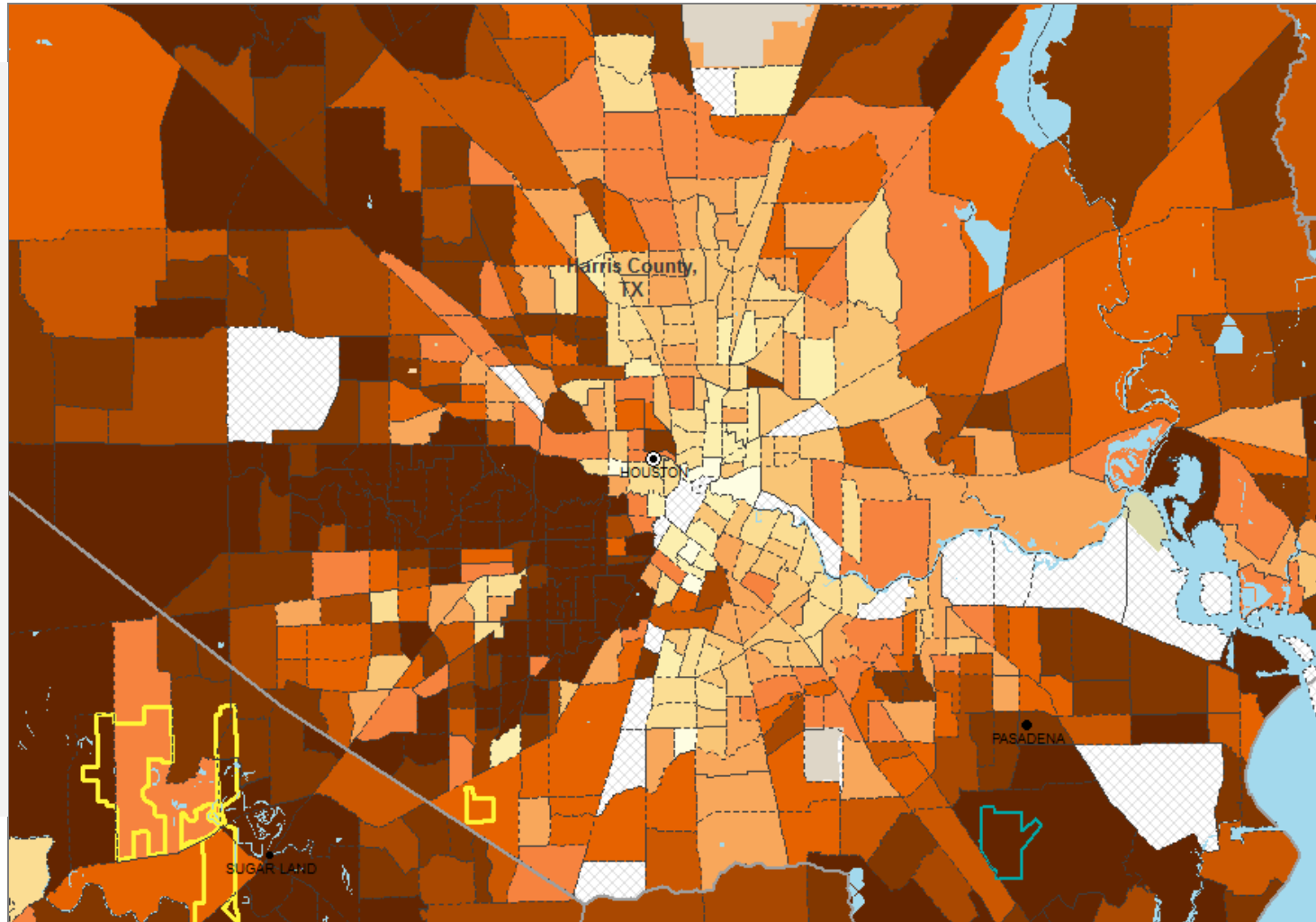
-  State Capital
-  City Pop. 30K to 50K
-  City Pop. 50K to 100K
-  City Pop. 100K to 250K
-  City Pop. 250K to 500K
-  City Pop. Over 500K
-  Place Pop Less than 30K
-  State
-  County
-  Census Tract - thick outline
-  Census Tract - thin outline
-  Airport/Airfield
-  Park/Forest
-  Cemetery
-  Military
-  Prison
-  Educational Institution



1990 Census Tract

Average Family Income





























- Missing Data
- n/a (<100 base cases)
- < \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$30,000
- \$30,000 to \$35,000
- \$35,000 to \$40,000
- \$40,000 to \$45,000
- \$45,000 to \$50,000
- \$50,000 to \$55,000
- \$55,000 to \$60,000
- \$60,000 to \$75,000
- \$75,000 to \$567,898
- State Capital
- City Pop. 30K to 50K
- City Pop. 50K to 100K
- City Pop. 100K to 250K
- City Pop. 250K to 500K
- City Pop. Over 500K
- Place Pop Less than 30K
- State
- County
- Census Tract - thick outline
- Census Tract - thin outline
- Airport/Airfield
- Park/Forest
- Cemetery
- Military
- Prison
- Educational Institution

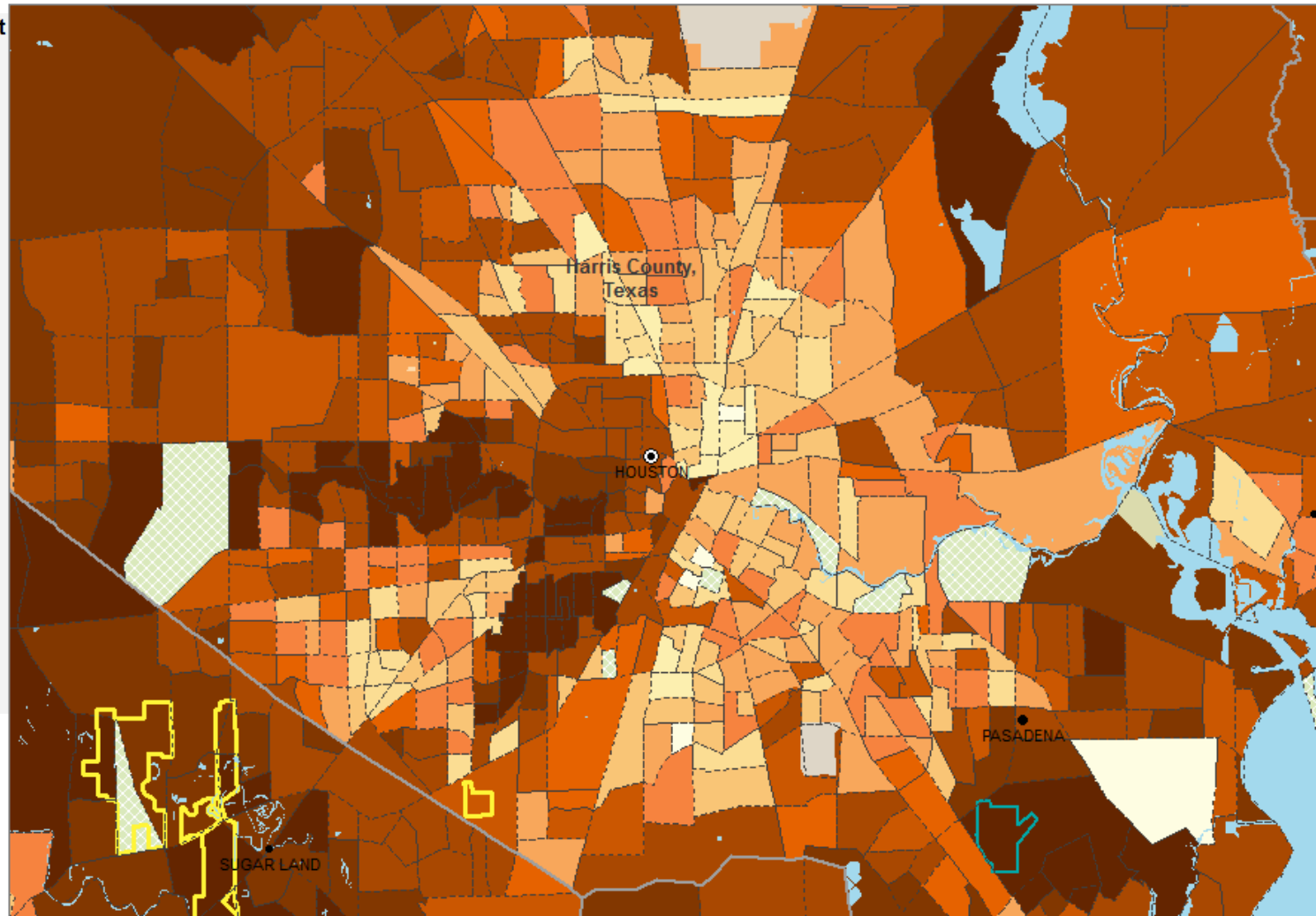


Map 5B 1990 Income

ACS 2005-2009 Census Tract

Median Household Income

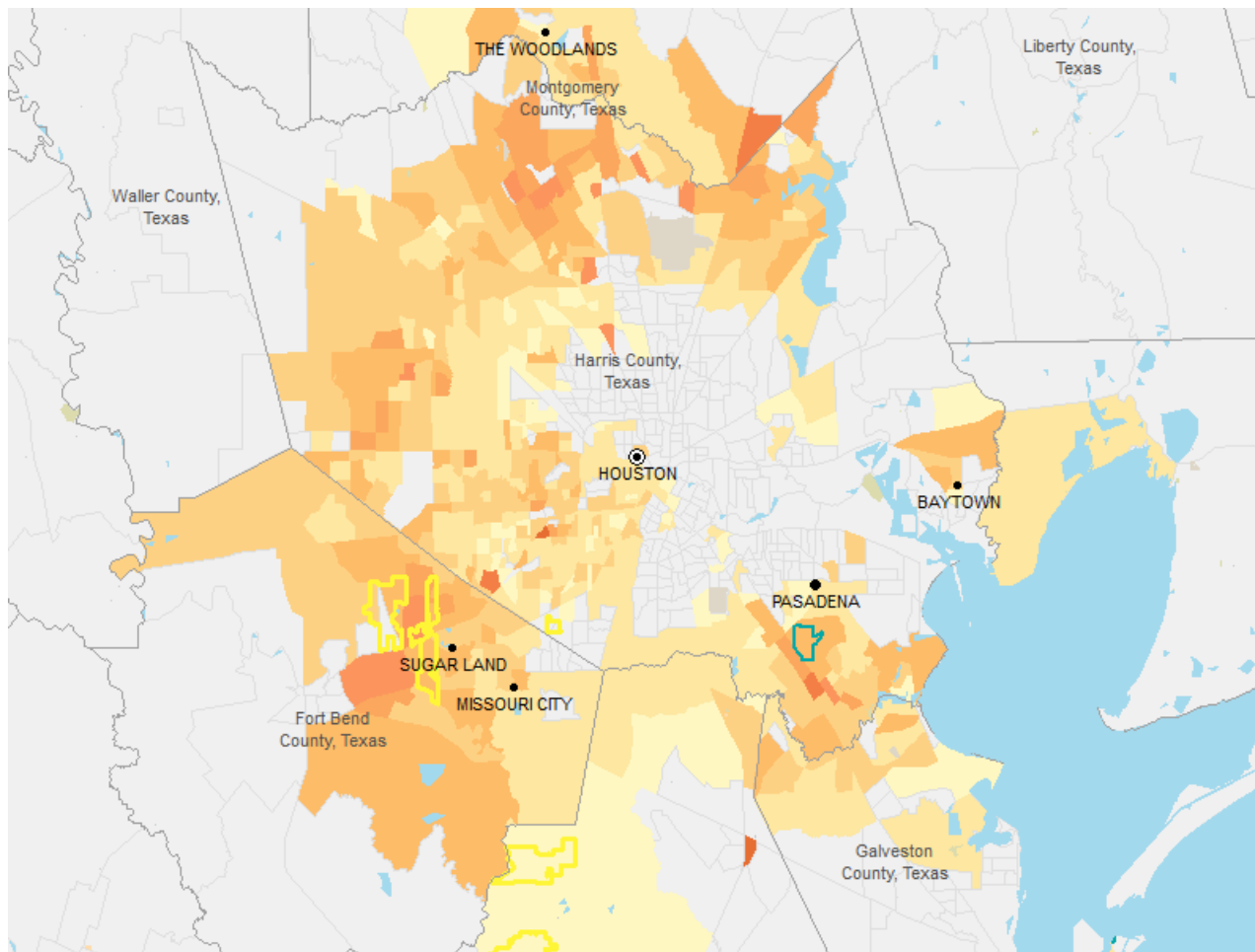
-  Data not available for area
-  Not released by Census
-  n/a (<100 base cases)
-  < \$15,000
-  \$15,000 to \$20,000
-  \$20,000 to \$25,000
-  \$25,000 to \$30,000
-  \$30,000 to \$35,000
-  \$35,000 to \$40,000
-  \$40,000 to \$45,000
-  \$45,000 to \$50,000
-  \$50,000 to \$75,000
-  \$75,000 to \$100,000
-  \$100,000 to \$250,001
-  State Capital
-  City Pop. 30K to 50K
-  City Pop. 50K to 100K
-  City Pop. 100K to 250K
-  City Pop. 250K to 500K
-  City Pop. Over 500K
-  State
-  County
-  Census Tract - thick outline
-  Census Tract - thin outline
-  Airport/Airfield
-  Park/Forest
-  Military
-  Prison



Map 5C 2009 Income

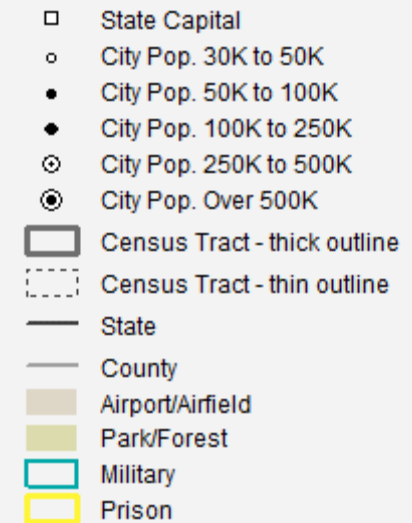
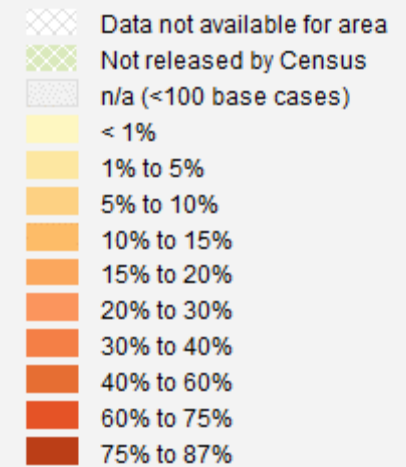
Map Series 6: Pakistanis and Indians in the Metropolitan Houston Area, 2010

Map 6A: Pakistanis in Houston (Suburbs)



2010 Census Tract

% Pakistani



Map 6B Asian Indians in Southwest Houston and Suburbs

2010 Census Tract - % Asian Indian- Houston Metro Area

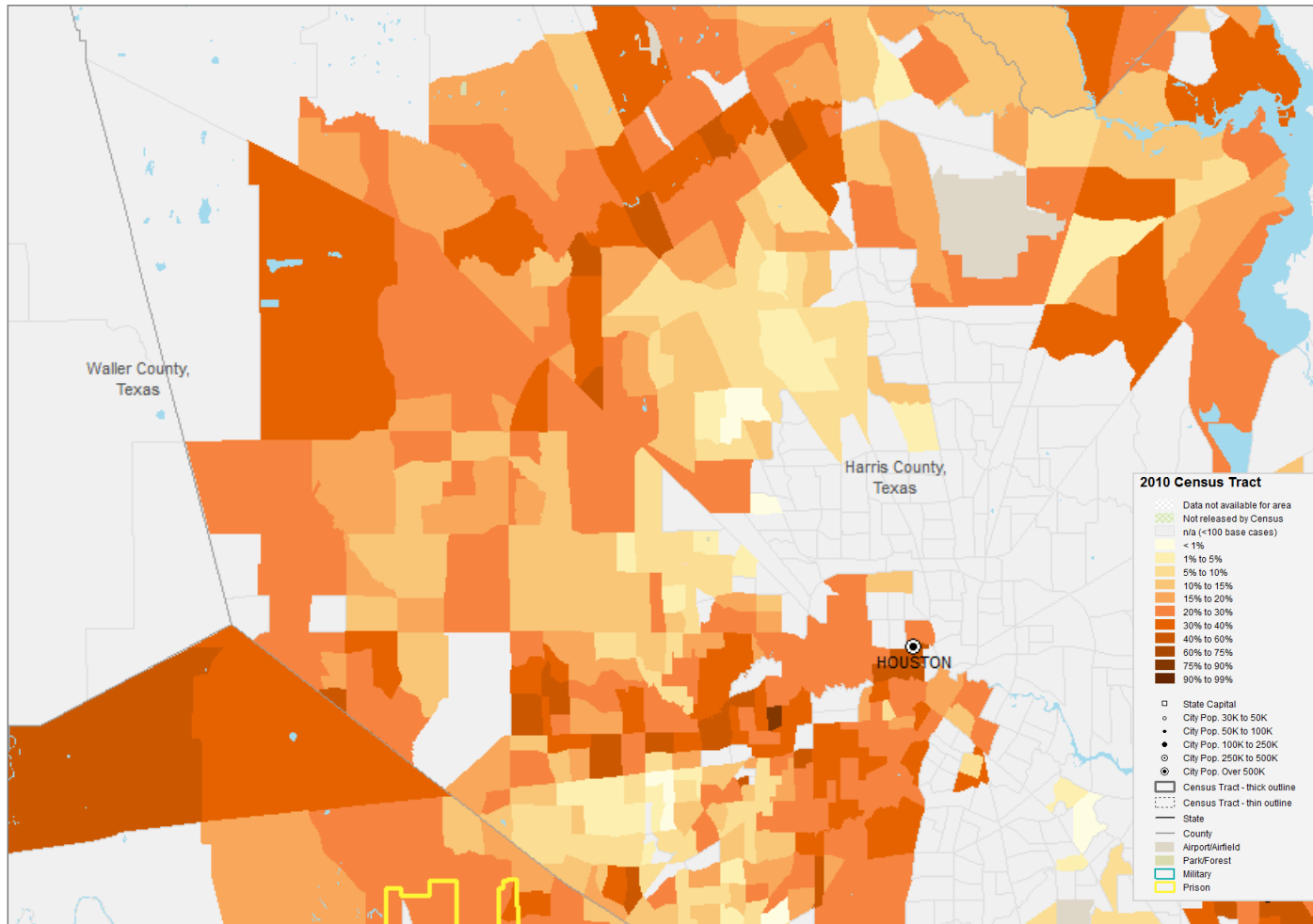


Figure 1 Ethnicity in the City of Houston versus Harris County (1960 and 2005)

